



MERGER OF TWO CONGREGATIONS SHOWS HOPE FOR THE FUTURE



Churches united – Hannah and Ben Crowley, from Hanbury Hill Baptist Church, with Rachel Westbury, centre, from Halesowen Baptist Church

TWO historic Black Country churches are looking for a new home after deciding to unite under one banner.

Hanbury Hill Baptist Church in Stourbridge and Halesowen Baptist Church have decided to solidify their relationship.

The 139-year-old Halesowen Baptist Church sold their building almost two years ago after it was deemed unfit for purpose but continued to meet in different locations.

In September the decision was made for Halesowen, which was left with just eight members, to join 187-year-old Hanbury Hill Baptist's Sunday worship and deacons meetings.

A unanimous vote by members of the two churches decided to go ahead with the partnership and it will be under the name, Hope Baptist Church.

The church is now looking to obtain a permanent home in Stourbridge where its larger group of around 150 members can worship.

Reverend Dave Morris, aged 59, who has been minister for Hanbury Hill baptists for six months, said: "Our vision is to establish a worship and community centre in Stourbridge town centre, within the ring road. "We are in the market for a property that we can, subject to planning permission, either convert into a church centre or demolish what's there to make way for a new building."

He added: "Both churches have about 200 years of history behind them, this really is historic."

The move will be supported by a building fund, which has been collected over the last eight years by members of Hanbury Hill Baptist Church in Chapel Street.

Hanbury Hill Baptist Church secretary Diana Seeney, 75, who has been at the church for 50 years, said: "It's been great from our point of view to have them come in and join us. From their point of view, this has opened up a lot of new and exciting opportunities."

"That is our long term aim but at the moment the church is going to be situated at Hanbury Hill. We believe God will lead us to the right place eventually."

BUSINESS

BID to boost town is being launched

HALESOWEN could be set to become a Business Improvement District (BID).

A campaign will be launched tomorrow (Friday) which will see businesses across the town urged to 'vote yes' in favour of the initiative.

It is estimated that a BID company in Halesowen could generate £51,668 with a one per cent levy on businesses and £103,337 if it was set at two per cent.

Regeneration boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "Business Improvement Districts are about empowering businesses to make improvements to their local area."

BID supporters will visit businesses across the town with a brochure containing details of the plans.

STABBINGS

Murder accused is back in court

A PROVISIONAL trial date has been set for a man accused of murdering a mother and her son in Stourbridge.

Aaron Barley is charged with the murder of Tracey Wilkinson, 50, and 13-year-old Pierce Wilkinson and is to face trial on October 3, although the 23-year-old has not yet entered a plea.

Barley, remanded in custody at Birmingham Crown Court on Monday, is also charged with the attempted murder of father Peter Wilkinson.

● Daughter's sad return – Page 3

FOOTBALL

Hospice wins at big charity match

THOUSANDS turned out for a charity football match that raised more than £20,000 for Mary Stevens Hospice.

A team of ex-West Bromwich Albion pros, led by former captain Darren 'Big Dave' Moore, beat a Stourbridge Legends XI at the War Memorial Athletic Ground, Amblecote, on Sunday.

A mascot race, won by Baggie Bird, preceded the game. Dudley Mayor Mohammed Hanif lent his support to the event, co-founded by Matt Webb, in memory of his late mother Jane. Matt said: "I can't tell everyone how grateful I am."

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INSIDE

GRAND DAY OUT WITH DOREEN



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MP backs campaign for speed restrictions on busy road

SCHOOL IN PLEA FOR CROSSING

CAMPAIGNERS are urging council bosses to introduce speed calming measures outside an Halesowen school and have won the backing of the town's MP.

Dozens have joined forces with pupils and parents in a bid to get flashing signs and a pedestrian crossing installed outside Howley Grange Primary School, on Howley Grange Road

Children have backed the campaign by designing a banner to put across the school's perimeter fence advising motorists to slow down. Now Dudley Council say the will discuss starting a community speed watch in the area in a bid to tackle concerns over inconsiderate driving.

Jenny Chulow, a resident and childminder, walks to and from the school in Howley Grange Road twice a day. She said: "It's a wide main road and there are cars and lorries speeding a lot."

"I have received a letter from the after school club too, who say how dangerous it is."

"One lady has had two near misses and had to jump out of the way."

Concerned

She added: "The schoolchildren are currently designing a banner to put on the fence to get the message across. We have approached the council and councillors who support us too."

A campaign group has been set up by concerned residents and is being backed by Halesowen and Rowley Regis MP James Morris.

Last summer they group launched a petition calling for more traffic calming measures in the area.

Mrs Clulow, who is also the chair of The Friends of Howley Park, said: "This has been an ongoing problem. There has never been a serious accident but it is incredibly dangerous – it is only a matter of time."

"Another school in our area has recently

Report by Clare Butler

had a lot of investment with a redesign in their road, so we can't understand why the same shouldn't happen with us."

But Alan Lunt, a strategic director at Dudley Council, said that statistics didn't suggest that the road required traffic calming measures under current criteria.

He explained: "We undertook a traffic volume and speed survey in October 2016 and the results showed that traffic speeds were appropriate for this type of road, which has a 30mph speed limit. The average speed of cars in both directions was below 30mph."

"There have also been no accidents reported to police within the last three years, the standard time span for this kind of study."

"We would not expect to implement traffic calming measures based on these findings."

"However we understand that some residents are still concerned and we have invited members of the group to meet with us to discuss their concerns and to look at the possibility of setting up a community speed watch in the area."



Halesowen and Rowley Regis MP James Morris, right, joins campaigners outside the school

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Nothing suspicious about fatal fire



A police officer at the scene of the fire

A FATAL house fire in Cradley Heath is not being treated as suspicious, police have confirmed.

A woman in her 50s – named locally only as Joanne – was found dead at the flat in New Pool Road on March 29.

Emergency services attended the scene just after 9.30am but nothing could be done to save the woman, who lived alone at the flat.

ON Monday a West Midlands Police spokesman said the fire is being treated as 'non-suspicious'.

The victim is believed to have

been discovered by a relative who then called emergency services to the scene.

A burned-out mattress was on the front lawn of the property as fire investigators combed the flat.

A cat was found hiding in the kitchen and is now in the care of the RSPCA.

Neighbours spoke of their shock at what had happened and described Joanne as being quiet but well-liked in the area.

Sheila Smith, aged 74, who has lived in the flat above her for around

five years, said: "I was about to go out to the doctor's when her brother knocked the door and said she that was dead."

"It's such a shame, I knew her and she used to walk my dog for me."

"I only saw her on Saturday in town. She was nice."

Neighbour Edna Slater, 74, broke down in tears as she laid flowers on the lawn in front of the property yesterday.

She said: "She was a lovely. She was very quiet and never bothered anybody. She loved cats."

Hate campaign 'classic case of domestic abuse'

POLICE have labelled the actions of a businessman who waged a hate campaign against his ex-partner as 'a classic case of domestic abuse'.

Robert McNaughton was jailed for five years for waging the campaign – which culminated in a petrol bomb being thrown at her car.

He had denied being behind fake Facebook accounts, which were set up to troll hairdresser Sharon McCann during a six-month harassment campaign.

However, police charged 51-year-old McNaughton, of Tenter Drive, Halesowen, with conspiracy to commit arson and harassment and he was found guilty after a trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court. On Friday he was jailed for five years.

Sergeant Chris Jones said: "McNaughton was a successful local businessman who could not handle being rejected and became hell bent on destroying his ex-partners life."

"She was in total fear and we knew that we needed to stop the person responsible."

Control

"This was a classic case of domestic abuse, he wanted to control his ex and used fear to do that."

"Domestic abuse comes in many forms and if you are suffering physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse, or are being threatened or intimidated in your home by a current or previous partner or adult family member, you are a victim of domestic abuse."

"You may be feeling frightened, isolated, ashamed and confused. Remember you are not to blame for what is happening. You are not alone, and above all you do not have to suffer in silence. Help is available."

"We are pleased that the jury saw through his lies and that he has now been sent to jail. We hope that this offers some comfort to the victim and we commend her bravery for coming



Robert McNaughton – jailed for five years

forward in what has been a long and successful investigation."

The court heard that McNaughton's ex-partner had rejected his attempts at a reconciliation but he was unable to accept this and launched a systematic hate campaign.

Not long after they parted McNaughton had been jailed for six months for contempt of court for ignoring an order to move a huge pile of rubbish at the RDF site at Moor Street, Brierley Hill, which he was responsible for as a company boss.

During December 2014 and Febru-



Sharon McCann – has moved abroad

ary 2015 he bombarded Miss McCann with abusive Facebook messages, threatening to release intimate images. The court heard that it had driven her to consider suicide.

Attacks

But he was not content with simply terrorising her via social media. He hired two men, Matthew Barker and Joden Smith, to carry out attacks on her home in Hopwood Close, Halesowen, culminating in February 2015 when her car was set on fire.

Prior to the start of McNaughton's trial, Matthew Barker, aged 42 from Leicester, pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiracy to commit criminal damage, while 20-year-old Joden Smith, also from Leicester, admitted the conspiracy to commit criminal damage and arson, recklessly endangering life.

Barker was jailed for 43 months and Smith was sent to a young offenders' institute for four years.

The court heard that Miss McCann has since sold her Halesowen home and moved abroad.

Shoplifter who defied ban gets 18 months jail

A PROLIFIC thief, who defied a court ban to go on a shoplifting spree in Dudley town centre, has been locked up for 18 months.

Gavin Garratt struck nine times in two months at Dudley stores from which he had been outlawed, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. The 29-year-old took food, cosmetics and even pens to fund his drug habit with the largest single haul being valued at £173, explained Mrs Sati Ruck, prosecuting.

The one-man crime wave started on January 5 and continued until his arrest on March 1. It involved shops in and around Dudley High Street with most of the offences captured on CCTV.

"He is the subject of a Criminal Anti Social Behaviour Order (Crasbo) preventing him visiting these shops but keeps going into them," said the prosecutor.

Mr Glenn Cook, defending, said: "He is a drug addict who has been using Class A drugs for the past four years, during which time his offending has accelerated. This was a two-month crime spree."

Garratt from Jarvis Close, Brierley Hill, who had previous convictions for theft, pleaded guilty to nine thefts and nine breaches of the order.

He was locked up for a total of 18 months by Recorder Anthony Warner, who told him: "You have committed this type of offence many times before. Drugs cannot be regarded as an excuse for committing crime. In fact, it can be regarded as an aggravating feature."

Appeal for action over 'boy racers'

CALLS have been made for action on 'boy racers' causing a nuisance in an area of Halesowen.

Long Lane at Shell Corner has been labelled a 'racetrack' by councillors.

Car racers are believed to be driving up and down the road at speed late at night.

Residents have flagged the issue to police and taken to Facebook to express their concern.

Councillor Hilary Bills, who represents Halesowen North ward, said: "It comes and goes in our area but over the last week or so it has started up again. About 18 months ago we had a similar problem then and the police were great in sorting it out. We hope that they will be able to do the same this time."

Apartments plan on pub outhouse site

HOMES are set to be built next to a former pub in Cradley – on the site of a former outhouse.

An application has been lodged with Dudley Council to convert the site at the Chainmaker on Colley Lane into three apartments.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Council leading Big Switch move

DUDLEY Council is urging people to sign up to its latest Big Switch collective energy scheme, which is designed to save borough residents money.

The scheme promises residents market leading deals on energy prices not available elsewhere, through collective purchase power.

In previous auctions more than 6,000 people across Dudley have registered to switch for savings.

To find out more call Dudley Council Plus on 0300 555 2345 or visit www.dudley.gov.uk/bigswitch website.

Road scheme is nearly complete

A £1.5 million scheme to improve a busy junction between Wolverhampton and Dudley is nearing completion.

Roadworks have been ongoing at the junction between Birmingham New Road and Shaw Road since August last year.

Since January this has involved a complete closure of Shaw Road and Birmingham New Road being reduced to one lane in both directions.

Shaw Road has now reopened but off-peak lane closures will remain on Birmingham New Road until around Easter.

Society's match boosts charity

A BUILDING society from the Black Country held its inaugural charity five-a-side tournament in aid of Teenage Cancer Trust.

More than 70 players pulled on their football boots for the West Brom's Charity Cup at Goals Dudley, on Cakemore Road in Rowley Regis.

The tournament and a raffle for prizes including signed West Bromwich Albion and Aston Villa shirts raised more than £1,200 for the society's nominated charity.

Supermarket's bags of help for local causes

COMMUNITY projects in the Black Country could receive a cash injection thanks to Tesco's Bags of Help initiative.

Tesco have teamed up with Groundwork to launch the monthly roll-out of its funding scheme, which could see grants of up to £4,000 – all raised from the 5p bag levy – being awarded to community projects in Dudley and Cradley Heath.

Ask in store for more information or visit www.tesco.com/bagsofhelp/

Work at bus station

TEMPORARY bus stops will be in place from Tuesday as resurfacing work is carried out at Cradley Heath bus station.

Passengers will face disruption when work gets under way at the bus station on Forge Lane. The work is expected to continue until April 22.

Lord Cobham buys golf club near his stately home

A NEW era for one of the area's top golfing venue is swinging into action after its sale to a Midlands peer.

Hagley Golf and Country Club has been bought by Lord Cobham, the owner of nearby Hagley Hall.

The club, on the outskirts of Stourbridge, had been on sale for six months and a deal was done last week which will see Lord Cobham take the reins from the Garratt family, who have owned it since its inception in 1980.

It was put up for sale by the family following the death of the club's principal shareholder Michael Garratt last year.

The club was marketed for £2.25 million and managing director Peter Garratt Johnson said the club has 'got its asking price' in what was 'quite a complex deal'.

He said he believes the new ownership will mean 'business as usual' for patrons and staff.

Mr Garratt Johnson said: "This has been in process for six months. Lord Cobham is behind it and it's going to be very much business as usual – we're pretty pleased with how everything has gone. That is why the Garratt family is selling to him."

"He is going to very much keep it as it is with the same membership and business model. He spoke at the AGM and all the members were pretty pleased with what he said. He's local and very much cares for Hagley. I've run it for 17 years and I'm going to go back to Australia now."

Doctor denying sexual assaults

A DOCTOR has denied sexually assaulting five patients while working at a surgery in Dudley during January of last year.

Dr Amirul Haque is alleged to have committed the offences at the practice between January 14 and January 22, 2016.

The 32-year-old, from Ladypool Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, pleaded not guilty to all five charges when he appeared at Wolverhampton Crown Court last Wednesday.

He was remanded on bail after a start date for his trial at the same court was provisionally set for February 8 next year.

The charges relate to five counts of sexual assault committed against separate patients.

Designs for new living well centres

ARCHITECTS from Halesowen are designing two 'Living Well Centres' for the Severn Hospice in Shropshire. Gould Singleton Architects have plans for a centre near Shrewsbury, and another is proposed for Telford.

Pressure mounts to save leisure centres

DUDLEY Council is under pressure to scrap plans to close its three leisure centres with some councillors saying they will not support the move.

The authority wants to shut leisure centres in Dudley, Stourbridge and Halesowen and replace them with two newly-built facilities in Dudley and Lye.

Almost 5,000 people are backing a petition against the proposal, which bosses say will save money.

The plan has led to concerns about a reduction in leisure facilities and people in parts of the borough facing travelling greater distances, particularly as the new centres would probably be in Dudley town centre and Lye.

Councillors are due to discuss the proposals next week in the face of a backlash from residents who want the three leisure centres to stay open.

The controlling Labour group may have to rely on some Conservative councillors to support the plan if they want to get it approved, after UKIP group leader Councillor Paul Brothwood said he would not support it. Labour does not command a majority at the council house.

Refurbishing

Council bosses insist the plan is more cost effective than refurbishing its existing sites, Dudley Leisure Centre, Crystal Leisure Centre in Stourbridge and Halesowen Leisure Centre. They also say the new centres would offer better, modern facilities.

But it would mean one of the borough's towns being left without a leisure centre.

Councillor Brothwood said: "This is a red line for us. We must have at least three leisure centres given the size of our population."

"We have seen the shocking statistics in how many unhealthy people we have in the borough and people need to have access to leisure centres. We are all for modernising but not at the expense of closing leisure centres."

Tracy Wood, a former councillor who is leading the campaign against closure said the council should listen to the hundreds opposed to closing the centres. She added: "These centres are vital in our communities – especially Halesowen and Stourbridge."

Daughter's floral tribute to mother and brother

A HEARTBROKEN daughter made an emotional return to her Stourbridge home to lay flowers in memory of her mother and younger brother, who were stabbed to death in an horrific incident last week.

Student Lydia Wilkinson, aged 18, fought back the tears as she laid a pot of flowers outside her family home in Greyhound Lane, Norton, on Sunday.

Her message said: "You are incredible. We love you more than words can ever describe and are so proud of you. I hope there's a Chanel store up there for you mom."

She took her time to read the dozens of messages left by well-wishers outside the house.

Just days before, while Lydia was studying at the University of Bristol, her mother, brother and father were attacked at their home.

All three suffered serious stab wounds. Her mother Tracey, aged 50, was pronounced dead at the scene while Pierce, her 13-year-old brother, a West Bromwich Albion fan, died later in hospital.

Caring

Lydia's father, 47-year-old Peter Wilkinson, a managing director at Asset International in Bilston, was seriously injured with stab wounds to his back and chest. He is in a stable condition in hospital and has been visited by his daughter.

She was too upset to speak to the Press during the visit arranged through West Midlands Police, but issued a statement paying tribute to her mother and her brother.

She said: "Our family is devastated at the loss of Tracey and Pierce. They were extremely loved by all of their family and friends."

"Pierce was a fun-loving, friendly and happy boy, who loved computer games and made everyone smile. Tracey was loving, caring and a wonderful mother and daughter, always putting others before herself."

Lydia was comforted by her boyfriend Will Thompson and his family, who also laid flowers at the scene, next to the scores of tributes left by devastated friends and neighbours.

Aaron Barley, 23, has been charged with murder and attempted murder. It had been previously reported that Barley, of no fixed address, had been taken in by the Wilkinson family. Lydia strenuously denied this. She said: "The family did not provide refuge for homeless people and the suspect had never lived at the family home, but had been assisted by the family in the past 12 months."



Brave Lydia brings flowers to her family home where her brother and mother were fatally injured



Lydia with brother Pierce and father Peter



Suspect Aaron Bailey, picture from Facebook

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COUNTY NEWS

Tourism sector being hit hard

IT'S tough going in the tourism and hospitality business in the West Midlands at the moment, according to a new report. Rising inflation hitting household spending and risks over Brexit are thought to be behind the uncertain outlook.

Latest figures suggest one in three operators in the local tourism industry has an above average risk of insolvency – the highest figure for any UK region. The statistics form part of insolvency and restructuring body R3's monthly sector tracking report.

However, the construction sector is among the most stable in the UK.

Region's brews part of range

A PAIR of Black Country breweries are among local suppliers who will have their products sold at Midcounties Co-operative food shops in the West Midlands. The retailer operates 43 shops in the region and is to offer more than 70 new products from 25 drinks producers.

The local beers, ciders and ales include drinks produced in the Midlands, with bottled beers from Sadler's Ales in Lye and Holden's Brewery at Woodseton. Bewdley Brewery in Worcestershire is also featured in the Best of Our Counties range.

Declutter call to help charity

NEARLY a third of people in the West Midlands feel guilty about the amount of money spent on shopping trips, according to the British Heart Foundation in its Spring Clear Out campaign.

In a survey of more than 2,000 UK adults, secrets across the area were revealed, with men and women hanging onto an average of six items each that no longer fit. The BHF have released the statistics to encourage everyone to declutter and donate unwanted items to their local BHF shop.

Hole lot of problems

Potholes: How you are legally

COUNCILS across the Black Country and Staffordshire are paying out tens of thousands of pounds in compensation as motorists pay the price for the region's potholed roads.

Andy Shaw, partner in the Personal Injury team at Higgs & Sons, sets out the legal position for motorists.

Under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 the authority has a duty to maintain the highway. In considering whether the Highways Authority has breached its duty, the courts will consider

a) The character of the highway, and the traffic which would reasonably be expected to use it

b) The standard of maintenance appropriate, taking into consideration the type of traffic which might use it

c) The state of repair in which a reasonable person would expect to find the highway

d) Whether the highway authority knew or could reasonably have known that the condition of the part of the highway was dangerous

Inspection

To succeed in a claim for damages for repair costs or personal injury, a person must prove the highway was in such a condition that it was dangerous to traffic or pedestrians, that the condition was created by the failure to maintain them and is able to prove that the pothole was dangerous. The burden falls on the defendant to prove that they have a defence under Section 58 Highways Act 1980.

If the local authority can prove that they had a reasonable system of inspection and maintenance, they will establish a defence and any claim for damage or personal injury will fail.

The burden is on the person making the claim to prove their case.

Anyone wishing to take action should get evidence – photographs ideally taken with a ruler showing the size and nature of the pothole are essential. Report the pothole. A failure by the local authority to repair the defect promptly may help your case.

Also, contact a solicitor or your insurance company.



Village problems – Mark Keegan sent pictures of potholes in Station Road, Common Road and Giggety Lane, just some of the many in Wombourne



Andrew Duff took this picture of Wergs Hall Road in Wolverhampton



Twitter picture of pothole in Carlisle Road from @SteveCannock



D J Baker took this picture in Buchanan Avenue, Walsall



Nick Hodgkinson has nominated the A491 through Kingswinford

WITH increasing anger over the state of our roads and councils spending tens of thousands in compensation to drivers, we asked readers to highlight some of the worst potholes in our region.

And we have been overwhelmed by the response with some shocking pictures arriving of small craters in our road network.

A damning report last week revealed that some £1.25 billion is needed to get roads in the West Midlands back into a reasonable condition with one in six needing to be repaired or even facing closure within the next five years. The Annual Local Author-



ity Road Maintenance survey blamed an ageing network, decades of underfunding, increased traffic and wetter winters for the problems.

The Chronicle also revealed last week that some £270,000 has been paid out in compensation to drivers over the last four years by Staffordshire County Council alone.

Given the reports we have received from readers across the whole of Staffordshire and the Black Country, our crumbling roads are peppered

with potholes. Nick Hodgkinson sent pictures from a stretch of the A491 which he said was badly damaged 'along its whole length between the Wall Heath island through Kingswinford, where it is particularly bad, then out into Wordsley and Amblecote.'

Mark Keegan highlighted potholes in Station Road, Common Road and Giggety Lane in Wombourne. He said: "The ones with the drains are quite dangerous for cyclists."

Andrew Duffy sent in a picture of a wide pothole in Wergs Hall Road in Wolverhampton and even dropped a newspaper in to illustrate the size.

Another crater was sent to us on Twitter showing a pothole in Carlisle Road on the Longford Estate in Cannock. While reader Tracy Taylor

flagged up problems in Broad Lane, Bloxwich.

Neil Sheldon, of Halesowen, contacted us to say: "In my job as a Trainer Assessor I now travel all over the West Midlands and I can testify that I have never seen the road network in such a bad condition."

The Chronicle wants to identify the top 10 pothole blackspots in the region to flag up to our councils and we need your help. If you know of any pothole-ridden routes or deep holes please let us know. You can email details of the road, preferably with a picture, your name and any comments you would like to make to Sue.Attwater@expressandstar.co.uk

Or drop us a line at Editorial, The Chronicle, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

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Nearly 100 homes in plans for works site

PART of a disused industrial estate in Stourbridge is set to make way for nearly 100 homes.

Apartment buildings will be created on former Jubilee Works and the William Foxall site in a bid to 'upgrade the area'.

The site in Balds Lane, Lye, could see up to 51 houses and 39 apartments developed with parking. It comes as businesses on the site are to relocate, leaving the three-acre plot empty.

There is proposed to be 22 semi-detached and 29 terraced houses alongside 39 apartments in three separate three-storey buildings.

Planning documents, put forward by RDI Developments, say: "Each of the proposed dwellings is served by a private garden. It would provide a high quality residential development upgrading the area... that will benefit the community from a social and economic standpoint."

However, Councillor Richard Body, who represents Cradley and Wollescote ward, said that traffic problems would need to be assessed before the plans were approved.

Traffic-based objections were put forward by residents and nearby businesses, describing Balds Lane as 'a rat run' where speeding took place.

A decision will be made in the coming weeks.

New museum will journey back into the dinosaur age

A WALKWAY taking visitors on a journey through Dudley's history back to earliest geological times is being created at the town's archives centre.

The building, off Tipton Road, has undergone extensive building work to accommodate the items and artwork previously displayed at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery in St James's Road.

The museum and gallery closed in December as part of council cost-cutting moves.

Now building work has finished on converting part of the archives centre into a museum display space.

Cabinets and shelves are being put into place before items are brought out of storage to be put on show once again.

Ambitious

One of the most exciting aspects of the ambitious plans is the addition of an animatronic dinosaur.

A large plinth has already been created to enable this Jurassic addition to take centre stage, ready for when this new public area opens in September.

The project is being overseen by Jane Lamine, business operations manager at Dudley Council. She said: "It's very exciting. There's going to be a big animatronic dinosaur and a dio-

By Judith Hawkins

rama about what it was like back then.

"We will also display some of the Dudley Castle finds from the archaeological dig. They have been on display previously but only a very small selection. We will be able to display pieces people have never seen before."

The new display space will mean many of the borough's treasures being taken out of storage and put on public view for the first time, from fossils to many fine examples of local glasswork.

The collections will span the ages from pre-history, through Roman and medieval times to the Industrial Revolution.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, cabinet member responsible for tourism, said: "It's going to be a new museum, fit for the future."

Alan Lunt, a strategic director at Dudley Council, added: "I'm sure people will love their new museum."

Nearly new glam wear boosts hospice



Bride-to-be Hayley Watkins with Joanne Townsend, left, and Amanda Bowen at the sale

A CHARITY sale which saw new and barely worn wedding and prom dresses sold has been hailed a 'great success' after raising hundreds of pounds.

Mary Stevens Hospice held the sale at Cradley Heath Liberal Club.

Dozens attended the event which saw the dresses, donated to the Stourbridge-based charity, sold in a bid to raise vital funds for the hospice.

Amanda Bowen, Deputy Head of Fundraising & Lottery at Mary Stevens Hospice Group said: "The event was a great success. About 30 to 40 ladies came through the door within the first couple of hours."

"We are thinking of holding another in a couple of months."

Amanda thanked the owners of the club, who allowed the charity to hold the sale free of charge.

Suits were also sold at the event, so fathers, husbands, boyfriends and sons were not left out.

The hospice is also holding a coffee morning at its Hagley Road HQ on April 15 between 10.30am and 1pm.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Concern over closure of store

A CO-OP store in Halesowen is closing having only opened a few years ago.

The store on the site of a former petrol station off Manor Lane and Kent Road in Halesowen will shut later this month.

New roles are currently being sought for staff.

Halesowen South ward Councillor David Vickers expressed his concern at the loss of the shop.

He said: "I am disappointed, particularly for the residents, especially the elderly. It is taking a way a much-needed facility in the area."

A spokesperson for The Midcounties Co-operative, said: "After much deliberation, we have taken the decision to close our Manor Lane store on April 21."

Campaigners need £4,500 for solicitor

CAMPAIGNERS striving to restore Dudley Hippodrome have hit an obstacle as they need to raise £4,500 for a solicitor.

Until the money has been found, they will be unable to submit legal plans to the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and start work on refurbishing the iconic building, which they saved from demolition.

The delay was revealed during a meeting of The Black Country Hippodrome Ltd on Sunday. Campaigner Larry Homer said: "We are limited as to what we can do until we raise the money."

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



It's just the ticket for winding up wardens

A PARKING company has been working overtime in Birmingham, plastering a battered old Hyundai with 26 fixed penalty notices, worth £100 a time – at least 10 times what the car is worth.

It's not often that I feel much sympathy with traffic wardens, but on this occasion they have a point.

It must be a bit annoying if people just abandon old bangers on your property, with no legal way of getting them removed.

I don't suppose they will see any of the £2,600 they are seeking, but slapping on a fresh ticket each day probably brightens up the monotony of the job.

Besides, it's also given me a great idea of how to beat the wardens at their own game. While I don't normally advocate using pay-and-display car parks, there are occasions when there is no choice. Such as when you're in a strange town, and you don't know where the nearest back street with unlimited free parking is.

The important thing is that every time you use one of these car parks, make sure you hang on to the old ticket. And when you have built up a sizeable collection, stick every one on the windscreen every time you park.

Of course, you will still have to buy a ticket each time you park, but imagine making the warden check the dates of 20 different tickets. Almost worth the cost of buying the ticket in the first place.

□ □ □

SIR Dave Brailsford has been accused of presiding over a bullying culture during his time at the helm of British Cycling, pursuing a "win-at-all-costs" mentality.

This was followed by the chairman of UK Athletics, Ed Warner, saying that Britain puts too much focus on winning medals. Presumably, the England football team's in the clear, then?

□ □ □

THE chief constable of West Midlands Police has rallied against proposals for future police chiefs to be recruited from non-police backgrounds.

Dave Thompson said such a move would be "unthinkable", questioning whether outsiders would have the experience or knowledge required.

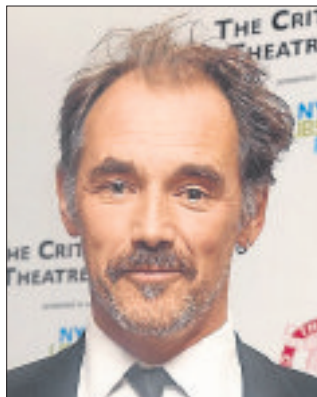
Totally agree. It would like, well, an MP with no journalistic experience becoming editor of a major newspaper, wouldn't it?

□ □ □

A SHOPPING centre in Dudley has been accused of dodging rates by claiming that a unit on its sixth floor is a snail farm.

Two questions: (1) how hard can it be to establish the presence or otherwise of a snail farm? If the place is teeming with shelled molluscs, it probably is one, if not, it's not. (2) Who in their right mind would want to breed snails, apart from, perhaps, the manufacturers of slug pellets?

Headlines could apply to any country JOINING the EU



Mark Rylance – supports questions over income tax exemptions



Jean-Claude Juncker – led the hand-wringing over UK leaving the EU



Nicola Sturgeon – angry over delay over a Scottish referendum

Leap in the dark, that was many years ago

INTO the abyss. On the edge of the unknown. A leap in the dark. Have you noticed how all the apocalyptic headlines about Britain leaving the EU could be just as well applied to any country joining the EU?

INDEED, history may record that Britain's greatest gift to Europe was to warn the nations now queuing up to join the EU that getting out is not a simple matter, as we were assured for 40 years, but well-nigh impossible. Once you're in, you're in and before the welcoming fanfares are even over, the gates are firmly locked behind you.

THEY still don't get it, do they? Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker led the hand-wringing and breast-beating as the European Union celebrated its 60th birthday without Britain. It was, he declared, a tragedy that the UK was leaving. Reality check, please. The whole point is that we are not leaving the organisation we joined back in 1973. The UK signed up to a free-trade area. We ended up as an unwilling member of an undemocratic 28-nation European superstate. Brussels changed the rules, not us. That's why we are quitting. And we won't be the last.

WHO will blink first in the titanic battle of the Amazons raging over Scottish independence?

Here are two obdurate women, neither of whom are given to retreating, in eyeball-to-eyeball conflict over one of the great issues of the day, which will affect these islands for generations to come. Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister, says Prime Minister Theresa May should not dare challenge the expected decision of the Scottish Parliament over an earlier, rather than a later, referendum on independence. May says a referendum cannot be countenanced until after Brexit. In short, never the twain shall meet.

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



I MUST be missing something in the raging civil-liberties row over an Englishman's right not to have his "end to end" encrypted emails deciphered by the authorities. For a start, what sort of person thinks he needs military-grade coding? Obviously, it's useful for adulterers, drug dealers and terrorists. But why would a normal, law-abiding person need it? It has only been available for a few years and presumably people managed perfectly well before it was invented. Secondly, if you really are dealing in life-or-death secrets, why would you take the risk, despite the maker's assurances, that end-to-end encryption will be secure for all time, and that neither the supplier, nor anyone else will try to unravel it? Thanks, but no thanks. When I go undercover I will rely on my trusty invisible ink, dead letter boxes and cryptic spy-greetings whispered on benches in Hyde Park. The corn grows tall in Vladivostok.

A DAILY Telegraph reader sees a peacock butterfly in late March and asks: "Is this a record?" Expect more of the same as readers everywhere report spring arrivals, from butterflies to cuckoos. They always end with the question: "Is this a record?" Every claim reminds me of the line from Round the Horne when a reader inquired: "Sir, I have a 12-inch grooved plastic disc with a hole in the middle. Is this a record?"

AN 80-something reader hits back at the report of old 'uns being wary of using cashpoints in case they hold up younger users. He tells another tale, of young 'uns causing the hold-ups:

"In goes the card and, oops, it's maxed out. He tries another card. Same result. Checks the account balance. Turns to his mate: 'Got your card?' Then the performance starts all over again."

I WROTE earlier this week about actor Mark Rylance supporting a tax system which would allow conscientious objectors not to pay income tax for defence spending. A reader writes: "In my view we should not be obliged to subsidise the arts from our taxes." Over to you, Mr Rylance.

"MERCATOR projection" may ring a bell from your school-days geography lessons. It is the commonest format used to portray the globe of the world as a flat map. Unfortunately, Mercator distorts the continents, shrinking Africa and enlarging Europe and North America. Schools in Massachusetts are now introducing maps based on the more accurate Peters projection. Pupils are reportedly astonished to discover how big Africa really is, and how much smaller is the United States. And our homeland? The British Isles appears as a little outcrop tucked away almost on the roof of the world. Such a tiny, insignificant place. So why does the rest of the world speak our language?

I BET there are huge savings to be made in the NHS by stopping doctors prescribing remedies which can be bought over the counter. The proposal, announced by NHS England, takes me back to a strange encounter with a doctor long ago when I had a sore throat. He was one of the old-school GPs; no eye-contact, little patience and much mumbling. "You could always try mumble-mumble," he mumbled. "Try what?" I asked. He sighed irritably, filled out a prescription form and handed it to me. It said "Strepsils." The Strepsils were cheaper at the chemist's than the cost of the prescription.

TALKING POINT



Bingo! I made grade by ticking right box

MANY years ago (all right, I confess, it was the early 1970s) I found myself facing a daunting challenge – trying to scrape a French O-level with only a rudimentary grasp of the language.

I'd done all right in class, with the help of the school's state-of-the-art language lab, a number of "personal" booths complete with tape recorders, allowing pupils to work at their own pace.

The exam itself, however, was a different matter. How would I be able to remember all those male/female nouns, verbs and accents? But wait, help was at hand in the shape of a series of multiple-choice questions, or "bingo papers" as they were known among us pupils.

I'll come to how I fared in a moment, but first let me explain how I came to recall that experience of pinning my hopes on ticking enough correct boxes in order to gain an educational qualification.

Just recently, I was filling in an application form online, only to find that I was prevented from clicking through to the next page by an ominous message telling me that my attempts so far were invalid, or words to that effect.

Luckily, I noticed on scrolling to the top of the page that another message informed me the passwords I had entered were wrong, so I checked them carefully, only to find I had typed them exactly as I had written them down.

After several minutes of re-entering these infuriating codes, I was on the verge of giving up and going back to the tried and tested method of pen and paper, when I had a brainwave: check that I'd written the passwords down correctly. Doh! I'd written down one bit wrong.

I was able to sail through the rest of the application process. All this started me thinking: have we become so reliant on ticking boxes online that we've lost our powers of logic? So many websites these days seem at least half-a-dozen clicks of the mouse ahead of the user. Type in your postcode and you'll be offered a list of the houses in your street.

And if you've used that website previously, it can be most alarming when, on being asked for your email address, you only have to offer up the first letter and the site will do the rest.

Then there's the conundrum of having to distinguish the letter O from the figure zero when asked to type in a security code, not forgetting the crazy notion that we automatically know whether to put spaces in, say, a phone number or 16-digit bank card number – and only after we've navigated the "Would you care to take our survey?" page.

I've decided we're just not up to any of this yet, especially as coming up with a "strong" password with a specified number of symbols, characters, both upper and lower case, and numerals can often take so long. As for the French O-level, I got a (very low-grade) pass. Bingo!

STEVE PARLETT

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No place for word 'war' in Brexit rhetoric

SO Theresa has finally set the date for invoking Article 50. I predict that the next strategy which the Hard Brexiters will employ will be to generate bitterness, ill-feeling and animosity between the ordinary people of Britain and the ordinary people of Europe.

The strategy is already getting under way with Philip Hammond's provocative and belligerent statements - 'we won't shrink from Brexit war', 'the British people have a great fighting spirit' and 'the UK will not sink off like a wounded animal'.

Who is he to speak for the UK when

it looks as if the United Kingdom may not be united much longer thanks to the machinations of the aggressive Hard Brexit minority? Has anyone in Europe used such inflammatory language and the word 'war'?

We voted to give up the privileges of being in the EU, they did not vote to expel us. Quite the contrary, they begged us to stay, united.

If you resign from a club you cannot then accuse the club of punishing you because you no longer enjoy its privileges. Get real!

I can only hope that the ordinary

people of Britain and Europe will quietly go about their business, continue trying to promote international fellowship and resist the propaganda which the militants will be pouring out. The ordinary UK citizens are now being bullied by a vociferous minority and forced to go in a direction which most of them did not choose.

I hope that we don't wake up in a couple of years to find that we have sunk the ship to stop any more refugees climbing aboard.

ROBERT PERRY, RBSA
Stourbridge

Where does NHS pledge come from?

COMMENTING on the under-funding of the NHS, several correspondents have repeated the claim which has been persistently and, in my opinion, erroneously made in the wider media.

It claims that an undertaking was given by pro-Brexit politicians that in the event of our leaving Europe our £53 million daily contribution to the EU budget would be used to fund the NHS.

However, having closely followed the run-up to the Referendum, its aftermath and subsequent events, I cannot recall one single politician stating that all, or even most, of this money would be directed to the NHS, much as it may need it.

It would appear that this wonderful piece of wishful thinking is simply being used by the Remoaners as a rather floppy and ineffective stick with which to beat the Brexiteers.

B WILLIAMS
Dudley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

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Chronicle Editorial,
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Code of Practice: Our policy is to correct errors as soon as we can. The Chronicles adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at

Blot on the town centre landscape

PEOPLE of Dudley, I would advise you not to get too excited over the transformation Dudley Council has planned for the Birdcage Walk shopping area.

If it takes anywhere near as long as the Cavendish House agenda, it will be a long way off. From every angle, Cavendish House is a disgrace - the bypass, Castle Hill and Birdcage Walk itself all give a disgusting view.

Don't anyone suggest it has only been evacuated for five years. By my reckoning it must be 20 years plus. This building is a blot on the landscape and so many deadlines have been suggested for improvements which never come about.

I despair, but then again the council is so busy with out-of-town developments, how can it find time for Dudley town centre?

MRS L SHELTON
Dudley

It's time to scrap the TV licence

ALMOST 109,000 people have signed the petition to debate in Parliament that it is time to scrap the annual TV licence.

At £145 it is now very expensive especially for elderly people who have fixed incomes. In this day and age it is an out-dated sum of money for people to find year in, year out.

Television, for some elderly people and those who are single, is the only means they have for entertainment. It is time for the BBC to take the responsibility and make its corporation pay its own way, like all of the other television companies have too.

Television programmes could have sponsors and why can't the BBC advertise in order to make money?

It would certainly mean they would have to trim down the enormous salaries paid out. And staff would need to be trimmed down as well.

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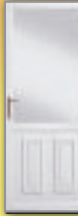
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Anti-social behaviour leads to more complaints in borough

ANTI-SOCIAL behaviour rose across Dudley borough last year, with hundreds of complaints over noise, rowdy youths and nuisance vehicles.

More than 2,000 incidents were reported across the borough between April and December last year.

The figures were revealed in a Dudley Council review of anti-social behaviour services. More than 200 extra incidents

Join Belle and clowns for fun in the libraries

FROM mini beasts to magic shows, there is plenty to do at Sandwell libraries this April.

Now and Grow Together at Bleakhouse Library this Saturday will see the launch of a community kitchen garden project with live music and food from 11am to 3pm.

Beauty and the Beast craft-inspired activities and stories read by Princess Belle will take place at Wednesbury Library on April 10 from 11am to 12.30pm, while she will also pose for photos.

There'll be clowning around at Cradley Heath Library on April 11 from 2.30pm to 3.30pm. Book your place with the library first.

Steve the Juggler is dropping into Rounds Green Library on April 12 from 9.15am to 9.45am, and a mini beast encounter will be taking place at Tipton Library on April 19 from 12.30pm to 2pm. Visit sandwell.gov.uk/libraries for all events.

of anti-social behaviour were reported both in the first quarter of the year, between April and June 2016, and the second quarter between July and September 2016, when compared to the same months during the previous year. In total, between April and December 2016, there was a total of 2,201 incidents of anti-social behaviour reported to the council's dedicated response team.

Between April and June 2015 there were 605 reports of antisocial behaviour, compared to 821 in April and June 2016. While between July and September 2016, there were 856 anti-social behaviour cases, up from 615 in July and September 2015.

Action

The report also detailed the action taken against the culprits with warning letters issued in 219 cases, and 133 referred to agencies such as the police between April 2016 and February this year. Four became subject to covert surveillance but only one incident of nuisance behaviour saw an eviction notice obtained.

Examples of anti-social activity reported to Dudley Council included noise and vehicle nuisance, drug issues, rowdy behaviour, intimidation, harassment and the threat or use of violence, criminal damage, vandalism and littering.

The report noted powers introduced by the Crime & Policing Act 2014 had helped tackle anti-social behaviour.

Skaters get bear-in to help hospital



Jamie Blundell and Amy Holland with their bear at SkateHut in Halesowen

IF you go down to Shenstone Trading Estate today you're in for a big surprise - SkateHut has a new member on their team, a giant white bear.

SkateHut is taking part in The Big Sleuth which follows on from the success of The Big Hoot in 2016 in aid of Birmingham Children's Hospital.

More than 100 giant bear sculptures will be leaving their paw prints all over Birmingham this summer, as the city gets set to become known as Bear-mingham.

Jamie Blundell, SkateHut's general manager, said: "When we originally set out to find a charity partner, Birmingham Children's Hospital was the charity that our staff kept mentioning."

"It seems that everyone at SkateHut knows of the amazing work that Birmingham Children's Hospital do and many of us have seen this at first hand."

"Taking part in The Big Sleuth is one of a number of fundraising events and commercial opportunities that we are hoping will raise as much as possible."

"In 2016 SkateHut raised £6,500 taking part in a few runs, a Zombie event and some in-store fundraising. We also sponsored The Big Gig series of events for Birmingham Children's Hospital."

SkateHut is now sponsoring their own bear, created by local artist and SkateHut employee, Amy Holland. She said: "I'm keen for the bear to be a girl so that young girls can see that it's OK to do extreme sports and that they can be powerful and fearless."

MPs joined Muslims in prayer vigil

BLACK Country MPs joined Muslim leaders from across the region in a prayer vigil for the victims of terrorism.

Halesowen & Rowley Regis MP James Morris and Warley MP John Spellar were among those in attendance at the event at The Baitul Ghafoor Mosque in Halesowen.

They joined members of Ahmadiyya Muslim community and local police for a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the Westminster terror attack, which saw terrorist Khalid Masood murder four people, including a police officer.

Wasim Shah, outreach coordinator of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Halesowen chapter, strongly condemned the atrocity.

He said: "Those who commit evil will not succeed in their ends. God's purpose is to unite people not to divide them through killing and mayhem."

"The terrorists are the enemy of faith and humanity, and it is beholden on all of us to ensure they have nowhere to hide."

"Together we are stronger and together we will defeat our common enemy."

Dudley Mayor Councillor Mohammed Hanif and West Midlands Police Inspector Laura Jones were also in attendance.

Blaze rips through fish and chip shop

A BLACK Country fish and chip shop has been gutted by a fire. Frydays Fish Bar, on Halesowen Road, Old Hill, was hit by the blaze on Sunday morning.

West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) was called to the address by reports of a 'severe fire'.

Four fire crews from Oldbury, Dudley and Haden Cross fire stations tackled the blaze, believed to have been caused by a tumble dryer.

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New Christian centre rises from ashes of Zion

A CHURCH which burned down in a devastating fire is to rise from the ashes – and now new images of its rebuild have been unveiled.

The Zion Christian Centre, which has been based in Halesowen for 40 years, is changing its name on Easter Sunday to the Lifecentral Church, and will also launch a new centre in Hagley.

In August 2015 the centre was ravaged by a blaze, which caused extensive damage to around half of the building on Little Cornbow, Halesowen.

Now artist's impressions have revealed what the renovated centre will look like, which is due to open in autumn of this year.

This includes the creation of a 400-seater auditorium to replace their former space lost in the fire.

The renovations will also see a modern, clad frontage created, along with new offices and toilets.

Since the early 1980s the church has been in the centre of the town, known for its youth work and its wide range of community provision and activities.

Pastor

Originally known as Zion Pentecostal Church, it has also become widely known in the area as 'The Zion'.

The slogan of the renamed Lifecentral Church will be 'a place to discover life', and it will have a new, second location at on a site at Haybridge School on Brake Lane, Hagley.

Lead pastor, Leon Evans, said: "As many people will know, in the summer of 2015 a huge fire tore through the auditorium, devastating the heart of this community church.

"What happened in the next few months was inspirational – people came together to help, donations were



An artist's impression of the new Christian centre, called the Lifecentral Church



Pastor Leon Evans looks at the damage at Zion Christian Centre in 2015

made, walls were painted, equipment was loaned and the church not only continued to thrive but to actually grow!

"Now – after 40 years in Halesowen – we are excited by these developments.

In addition to launching both Lifecentral Church as the new name on Easter Sunday, and a new location in

Hagley, we will then begin a refurbishment programme at our Halesowen base.

"It will result in a new auditorium at the heart of the town of Halesowen, opening in the autumn of 2017.

"It's a remarkable story of what good things can come from a tough, challenging situation and of the life that can rise from the ashes."

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That's a fine film to get yourself into!



Screen legends Laurel and Hardy—Stan Laurel is to be played by Alan Partridge actor Steve Coogan in a new film
PEOPLE in the Black Country have an opportunity to star in a movie about vintage comedy double act Laurel and Hardy, alongside modern day stars Steve Coogan and John C Reilly.

The feature film focusing on the iconic duo's final tour, which brought the comedy legends to the Black Country, is to be partly shot in Dudley.

Alan Partridge star Coogan will play Lancashire-born Stan Laurel and American actor Reilly, who starred in Chicago and more recently in Kong: Skull Island, will appear as Oliver Hardy in Stan and Ollie, which is being made by the BBC.

Details of the filming in Dudley are being kept under wraps but it is possible the decision to come to the town could be linked to the famous

Hippodrome theatre, where the duo appeared in 1947 and again in 1952 – staying across the road at the Station Hotel.

The theatre on Castle Hill, which was later turned into a bingo hall then left unused, is currently the subject of a fundraising campaign to refurbish and reopen it as a venue again – to be called the Black Country Hippodrome – after being saved from demolition.

Stan and Ollie has been written by Jeff Pope, who worked with Coogan on the Oscar-nominated Philomena, and chronicles the duo's final British tour, during which Hardy suffered a heart attack.

Laurel and Hardy burst onto the Hollywood scene in the 1920s, appearing in more than 100 films together,

becoming screen icons known and loved across the world. They performed together for more than 30 years.

Filming will also take place in Birmingham, where the duo also appeared on stage, and in Bristol.

An advert posted on castingcollective.co.uk said: "Men and women of all ages for filming in Birmingham and Dudley for a major feature film about Laurel and Hardy set in the 1950s. You must be over 16, legally allowed to work in the UK with National Insurance number. Good rates of pay."

The comedy duo appeared in the pages of the Express & Star following their appearance at Dudley Hippodrome in 1947, in which they were said to have 'rocked the packed house'.

Phil's candid camera caught the Black Country

A COLLECTION of 52 photographs taken in the Black Country over a 30 year period is being displayed at Dudley's Himley Hall.

The pictures are by professional news photographer Phil Loach and they represent a wide range of events and incidents.

But all of them display a distinctive sense of place and purpose which is peculiar to the Black Country.

Shoppers in a blizzard, fish and chip diners and kids making a playground out of a building site are among the subjects which have attracted Phil's attention – along with visits by celebrities and ordinary people appearing in extraordinary situations.

Other pictures reveal dramatic changes that have taken place in the Black Country landscape allied to the huge decline in industry.

Studied

Born in the Kates Hill area of Dudley in 1949, Phil studied photography at Leicester Polytechnic and then became a staff cameraman with the Dudley Herald. During the next 45 years he worked for other West Midlands newspaper groups. He is now a freelance photographer based in Tenbury Wells.

Alongside his press output Phil has always taken personal photographs and this new exhibition concentrates mainly on those images. He says: "Although I've had thousands of photos published over the years it's really nice to see this collection of favourites that say something personal and meaningful about my time working around the Black Country."

The exhibition, entitled A Time It Was, opened on Saturday and runs Sunday, June 11. It is open every day except Mondays between 2pm and 5pm. For more information call Phil on 07392 323379.



News photographer Phil Loach is displaying his favourite pictures taken over a 30-year period



John Inman, star of TV sitcom Are You Being Served?, at the opening of a shop in Halesowen in 1975



Pow wow? A visitor and two exhibitors take a rest at Dudley Show in 1992

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More pressure on hospital A&E

AN EXTRA 2,500 ambulances arrived at Dudley's main hospital last year, piling pressure on staff.

Figures showed the amount of ambulances bringing patients to Russells Hall rose every month between May 2016 and January 2017 compared to the same period 12 months earlier.

During that period, the hospital had to deal with an extra 2,588 ambulances – more than 200 a month on average.

The Dudley hospital experienced one of its busiest ever winters, which saw bosses forced to warn people only to attend if they had a serious condition.

The huge ambulance numbers are the latest indicator of severe pressure the unit has been under. The number of ambulances arriving at the hospital peaked in December with a total of 3,668 pulling up at A&E.

Data also showed hundreds of patients were readmitted within 28 days of leaving hospital.

Simple pleasures for park's meerkats



Eggs-citing discovery for the safari park's meerkats

EVEN the meerkats get Easter eggs at the West Midland Safari Park.

Keepers hide food in empty ostrich eggs, filling papier-mache eggs with treats such as meal worms, and decorate hard boiled chicken eggs and hide them in the enclosure.

Beth Cheshire, African village keeper at the attraction near Kidderminster, said: "Meerkats love eggs, so Easter is probably their favourite time of the year. In the wild they will climb up to bird's nests to steal and eat the eggs, so will go to great lengths to find the treats we hide in their enclosure."

The zoo has a host of events planned for its Easter Egg-stravaganza, including an Egg-splorer's Trail, craft club, themed shows, encounters and competitions.

Easter activities are included in the admission charge of £23 for adults, £18 children aged 3-15 and £21 concessions. Children under three are admitted free. Admission includes a voucher for a return visit or safari gift. Theme park rides are extra. See the park's website www.wmsp.co.uk

Cheers! Breweries secure Co-op deal

BLACK Country breweries are among local suppliers who will have their products sold at Midcounties Co-operative food shops in the West Midlands.

The retailer operates 43 shops in the region and is to offer more than 70 new products from 25 drinks producers across the area to its customers.

The new local beers, ciders and ales range includes drinks that are produced in the Midlands. Included are bottled beers from Sadler's Ales in Lye and Holden's Brewery at Woodsetton. Bewdley Brewery in Worcestershire is also featured as part of Midcounties' Best of Our Counties range.

Ian King, sales director at Sadler's Ales, said: "We've been working closely with The Midcounties Co-operative's local food team who have been very supportive in helping us to introduce our products to more people in the West Midlands."

Pride and touch of sadness at soldiers' potential last march

SCORES of proud former soldiers will reaffirm their freedom of Kidderminster by marching through the town next month – possibly for the last time.

The parade will also mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of 1st Battalion Mercian Volunteers and the disbandment of the 7th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.

It is being organised by the Mercian Volunteers Regimental Association, which maintains its traditions while

also looking after those who served with the Territorial Army unit.

They are among 500 members drawn from the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Mercian Volunteers, the Worcestershire and Staffordshire companies of the light infantry, together with successor units.

One member, Andy Williams, is coming from his home in America to take part while others are travelling from as far as Scotland.

Lt Col (retired) Keith Jeavons, a company commander at Kidderminster during 32 years service with the TA, is the association's secretary and treasurer.

He said: "There will be a lot of pride on show at the parade but it will be tinged with a little sadness because this will probably be the last time we do this because of our age. I am 80 and there are many older than me."

The Regimental Association, which also has members from the Black Country and South Staffordshire, will be joined by serving members of the armed forces, cadets and the Tenbury Wells Town band on the parade through the town on April 22. They will fall in at Batemans Yard car park at 11.30am and march at noon with the Drumhead ceremony and beating the retreat scheduled at 1.30pm.



Lt Col (retired) Keith Jeavons

Easter fun at leisure centre

CHILDREN can take part in fun and games at the Crystal Leisure Centre in Stourbridge during the Easter holidays.

The Dudley Council facility in Bell Street will be hosting a fortnight of special activities from Saturday, April 8, to Sunday, April 23.

The swimming pool, with slides and rapids, is open every day. There will be a water disco on Fridays from 3.30pm.

Youngsters aged seven and under can use the soft play suite throughout the week. Qualified staff supervise but parents must remain with their children. Entrance costs £2.50 per child. An hour-long trampolining session for under-fives will run at 9am on April 11, 18 and 21 for £5 per child. There are also 'gym and play' sessions.

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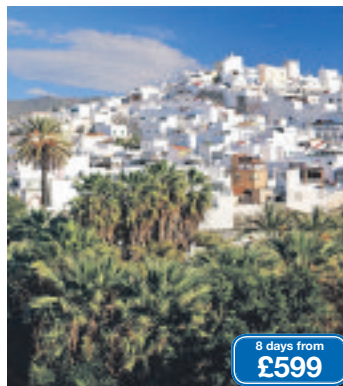
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Anniversary bash set to be a thriller

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And this year it is a celebration of 50 years of Gardeners' World, in Monty Don's own words, this is "our big anniversary bash". For foodies it's a double bonus as all tickets include entry to the BBC Good Food Show taking place at the NEC at the same time – June 15-18.

The Chronicles have teamed up with the organisers to offer 30 of our readers the chance to win a pair of tickets. These will be valid any day except Saturday.

So much on offer, the five gardens in the APL avenue offer take-home ideas, while a range of flora is on show across the Floral Marquee and a series of Show Gardens. The BBC Gardeners' World Live Theatre features

appearances by celebrities such as TV gardeners Monty Don and Alan Titchmarsh. The new series of the Gardeners' World TV programme has started with a feature on the Golden Jubilee Award Plant, to find the plant that has had the biggest impact on gardens in the last 50 years. The winning plant will be announced at BBC Gardeners' World Live on Thursday, June 15.

There will be a host of anniversary features planned including an 'Anniversary Garden' designed by the eminent Professor David Stevens, the 'Nostalgia Garden' by Paul Stone and birthday cake created exclusively by Nadiya Hussain and much more.

The BBC TV team will be filming live from the Show on Thursday, June 15 as part of a special one-hour anniversary Gardeners' World programme airing on BBC2 on the following day whilst the NEC event is in full swing.



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Simon Riley from Wombourne with his book



The crew of the Plymouth ship seen during the Falklands War



Simon's picture of the attack by the Argentinian Skyhawks



Simon nicknamed 'Spike' the radio operator



The hole in the Plymouth's funnel caused by a missile

Ex-radio operator Simon tunes in to his experiences during Falklands War

IT'S not a book title that suggests the author is a Falklands War veteran who survived an air attack by five Skyhawk jets at close range.

But Simon's A Poof's Name is the title that 55-year-old Simon Riley wanted for his no-holds-barred memoir of his time in the Royal Navy, including his stint on active service in the Falklands on HMS Plymouth.

The title is a direct quote from his boss on board ship, Radio Supervisor Wright, a burly Scot who from then on always referred to him by his nickname of Spike.

The book contains many anecdotes about life on the ocean wave on a boat staffed by a crew that was 75 per cent Glaswegian. There is even humour in the one stand-out story of the day HMS Plymouth was bombed – and hit – by Argentinian fighter pilots. Simon had not joined up in December 1979 expecting to go to war.

MEMORY LANE

By Marion Brennan

"I was looking for adventure, and joining the navy, visiting different parts of the world, seemed like a fairly safe bet," he recalls, sitting at the kitchen table of his neat Wombourne house.

But in April 1982, as his unit were on spring training in Gibraltar, looking forward to an imminent five-month deployment to the West Indies, news came over the World Service of an invasion of Britain's remote Falkland Islands.

"We wondered why on earth anyone would want to invade an island in the Outer Hebrides, says Simon, at the time a 20-year-old radio operator. "We had no idea where the Falklands were." But they had time to find out on the three-week 8,000 mile journey to the tip of South America at the head of the Task Force.

Once there, they spent long days on

watch, broken up only by the occasional daylight air raid on San Carlos Bay, known as Bomb Alley.

It was June 8 when that routine suddenly changed and HMS Plymouth came under fire as it nosed out of the bay to fire some 4.5in shells to the other side of the islands where there was reported to be an enemy observation point.

"I remember looking left and seeing five jets coming towards us," he says.

"The ship turned around and we were at full steam heading back to Bomb Alley when they swooped again and dropped five 1,000lb bombs on us, as well as 30mm and 20mm cannon shells which smashed into the port side."

Two of the bombs narrowly missed, but two more hit the quarter deck and another went through the funnel.

Amazingly, amid the noise and chaos on board, the young seaman had reached for his camera and taken pictures of the Skyhawks' approach. But for the next few hours, it was all hands on deck as thick,

acid fumes filled the ship from fires in the petty officers' mess and the dining hall.

The ship had also started to list as it took in water.

"The smoke was so thick you couldn't see through it. I remember throwing my gas mask to one of the lads in the tiller house so he could at least steer the ship.

"A couple of the guys in the turret got injured but not too seriously. We were so lucky – it was ridiculous."

Thirty-five years on, after time spent running a bar in Spain, working in commodity markets in London and walking the beat as a police officer stationed in West Bromwich, he decided to write down his experiences.

"I'd got all these stories in my head that I wanted to get down on paper, and I wanted to make my story different from other Falklands memoirs by making it light-hearted."

Now a family man, and a remarkably youthful-looking grandfather of two, he still meets up with his former shipmates at regular reunions. "We never did get to the West Indies," he grins.

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Mayor awards honour community leaders

COMMUNITY leaders were recognised for their outstanding work by the Mayor of Dudley at his charity ball.

Councillor Mohammed Hanif handed out awards recognising those who have stood out in the fields of education, sport, environment and art, as well as community.

Hundreds attended the ball and civic awards at the Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill.

Councillor Hanif said it was a 'real honour' to have met the 'amazing' winners and celebrate their achievements.

Each winner was presented with handcrafted glass trophy and a certificate in recognition of their work in one of seven categories.

Shaz Saleem, from Dudley, won the coveted mayor's award after receiving the most votes in an online poll for his work promoting taxi safety and charity fund raising. Rose Cook, Keith Stroyde and the Diyya Project came runners-up and also received a glass award for their hard work.

Edwards

The Duncan Edwards award for sport went to Andy Pountney, chairman of Stourbridge Town Football Club, in recognition of the club's success in the FA Cup. The runner-up was Mark Grazier who runs Hartshill Strollers Walking Football Club.

Lorna Morrison picked up the William Shenston award for environment, sponsored by Jessup Brothers, after impressing judges as chair of the Friends of March Park and Lawyers Field. Don Davies was runner-up for his work with the Woodsetton Charitable Trust.

The Thomas Attwood award for education, sponsored by The School Travel Company, went to Roger



The Mayor with Lorna Morrison



Mark Grazier with the Mayor



Shaz Saleem pictured with fellow guests at the mayor's ball and civic awards

Timmins, chairman of governors at the Brier School for 25 years. Alison Pell picked up the runner-up award as headteacher at Hawbush Primary School.

Sarah Andrews was awarded the Mike Holder award for business, sponsored by Dudley College, after setting up a company to deliver hot meals to the elderly. The runner-up award went to Olutayo Arikawe who provides a pharmacy service.

The Cedric Harwicke award for arts, sponsored by GMB Union, went to Jude Moreland who runs In-Sound Company Community Choir. Musi-

cian Gurchran Bhujhangy was the runner-up.

The Frank Foley award for community spirit, sponsored by Cushillo Personnel, went to Saleh Ali, chairman of the Highfields Tenants and Residents Association, while Vi Wood won the runners-up award for her work supporting the borough's homeless.

Thousands of pounds were raised from the awards, in association with A1 Rentals and Pro-tech Pavers, and will be split between the mayor's charities, which are Friends of Alfie Johnson, Diabetes UK Dudley branch and Dudley CIL.

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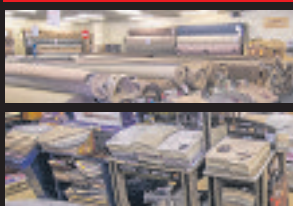
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How to race ahead to success in showroom

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips



LOVE it or hate it, the Grand National will be gripping the nation this weekend so I thought it timely to take a look at some racing memorabilia.

Collectable items range from photographs and prints to racehorse models and trophies, all produced to celebrate a famous race or the success of a famous horse or jockey.

There are of course certain names to look out for in terms of horses – we all remember Grand National stalwart Red Rum and Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Desert Orchid and (going back a few years) Arkle and Nijinsky – and those of legendary jockeys such as Lester Piggott, Jonjo O'Neill and Frankie Dettori.

Autographed photographs and race guides are very popular, some guides will have been signed by all jockeys taking part in a particular race which makes them extra special – especially if some of the jockeys are well-known nationally and internationally.

Many collectors are on the lookout for Beswick racehorse models, the really popular ones are of the



greats like Arkle and Red Rum but you can also find The Minstrel and Grundy, amongst others.

One of the first Beswick horses produced was of Derby winner Bois Rousse, modelled by Arthur Gredington.

The list of racing collectables is extensive, also sought after are metal 'members' badges, race cards, race entrance tickets and even items of jockey's clothing, such as racing silks.

Trophies are very collectable. Those dating back many years and presented at famous races can sell for huge amounts at auction – one won at the 1767 Richmond Cup made more than £122,000 at a London auction.

Paintings and prints can similarly command some high prices in the saleroom, depending on the age, subject and artist. . . look out for a Stubbs!

And if you are going to the Grand National on Saturday make sure you keep your programme – it may well be a collectable for future generations.

- Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm.
- The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables takes place at the Mill Street saleroom in Low Town, Bridgnorth, on Tuesday, June 6. Viewing will be during the weekend and on Monday and also from 10am on auction day. New sale bidders are advised to attends the saleroom early on auction day to register and be allocated a bidding number.
- Perry and Phillips hold sales on the first Tuesday of every other month.

Clothing gender divide is growing over time



Frilly whites – the New Romantic style

I HAVE been asked to model in a forthcoming fashion show for an ex-student of mine.

I have to admit to feelings of apprehension, at my age I would have thought my catwalk days were over (*sniggers*) but the idea is to have fun so I am happy to give it a go!

Matt Gyde is a very talented young designer who is producing a range of gender free clothing, no specific masculine or feminine look, no discrimination.

His garments suit both sexes in their shape, colour and the fabrics used, visit www.mattgyde.co.uk to see more "clothing that lets you be who you are".

It has made me ponder this idea further. Originally known as "unisex" a relatively new term, first used in a publication in 1968 and defined as garments considered appropriate for either gender in western society.

In the 1970s jeans shops sold various designs but in a range of sizes suitable for men and women, there was no difference in fit, only style, waist size and leg length and then in the 80s the man's suit was

STYLE FOCUS

with Janet Timmis



worn by women, tightly gathered at the waist with a belt and the sleeves rolled up to show a colourful lining.

Loose fit jumpers and smart shirts completed the look...it was a time when we could share clothing with our other half, hair and make-up trends were also common to both sexes. Later there was much publicity around David Beckham and his sarong.

Pop stars of these generations wore elaborate costume, lycra and glitz, styling flaunted by their avid followers, regardless of their gender, Bay City Rollers, David Bowie and Boy George to name but a few.

Punk and New Romantic clothing was totally genderless. Remember the short tartan skirts over bondage trousers and frilly white shirts?

Sadly we have not come any further

forward over the years, in fact our high street shops completely split the male and female departments, pretty dresses for the ladies and dark printed canvas jackets for the men, even the décor is designed to suit one or the other, and however used we are to seeing ladies in trousers, we have not yet overcome the sight of men in skirts. The closest "unisex" garments we see today are sports clothing such as sweats, t-shirts, fleece, trainers and the kilt.

Divide

Vivienne Westwood created a range of clothing designed to be worn by both sexes in 2014 and continues to break the mould.

Today we seem to be moving further from gender neutral, the divide even wider with the popularity of men's beards and elaborate jewellery and make up for women. What goes around comes around and I'm sure we will see a revival of the shared clothing trends. What in your partner's wardrobe will you borrow?

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Young should look out for signs of terrible disease

Report by Abi Jackson

BOWEL cancer may be much rarer in younger people, but it does happen – and a lack of awareness can have devastating effects.

Nearly 98 per cent of people will survive bowel cancer if it's detected at stage 1, a figure that drops to 10 per cent if diagnosed at stage 4.

Awareness campaigns, plus the NHS screening programmes for people aged 55 and 60-plus, mean generally, the prognosis has improved for older age groups, those most likely to get the disease (about 94 per cent of the 41,200 people diagnosed with bowel cancer every year in the UK are over 50s).

But the number of younger people with bowel cancer has increased by 45 per cent since 2004. There are currently more than 2,500 new cases a year in the UK in under 50s – and they are much more likely to be diagnosed late.

According to Bowel Cancer UK, three out of five will be diagnosed with cancer that's already stage 3 or 4. A third (34 per cent) only find out they have cancer in an emergency situation because symptoms have reached a crisis point – despite the fact they may have been seen a doctor numerous times.

Mark and Beth Lyson recall how their daughter Hannah – the 20-year-old who amassed thousands of followers when she blogged about fighting bowel cancer, before passing away in January this year – was "back and forth to the doctor" for years.

At first diagnosed with an inflamed gut, later in 2013, her GP said she probably had irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), the common, benign condition associated with a range of digestive symptoms. Hannah was prescribed medications to help with chronic constipation and worsening back pain, but no tests were carried out.

"The main thing she went back with was her back, she was always complaining about her back," says Beth, 55. "Then in August 2015, she went to Florida with her boyfriend and was sick a few times. We thought perhaps it was something she was eating, because of the doctor saying it was irritable bowel."

But the vomiting continued, on and off. "She'd be sick for a day, then she'd go a couple of weeks and be fine, then she'd be sick again," says Beth.

The tipping point came when summer 2016 approached. "Hannah was due to go to Camp America last June, and we were getting frightened that she couldn't go, she was in that much pain," explains Mark.

Beth took Hannah to see an on-call GP, and pleaded that tests be done to make sure she was well enough for her trip to the US.

All they wanted was reassurance it was safe to allow their daughter to jet off to America. But two weeks later, in May 2016, Beth and Mark found out that their sporty, Disney-loving 19-year-old girl, who didn't



Hannah Lyson blogged about fighting bowel cancer before she died in Janu-



Dave Smale is fighting the disease with support from wife

drink, didn't smoke – didn't fit any of the at-risk categories – had a tumour in her bowel, and four tumours in her liver.

"She already had her case packed for America, she was that organised," recalls Mark. "She had her T-shirts, shorts, flip-flops and all these things. The case was in the conservatory with name tags on it... It was devastating."

Shocked

Even the doctors were shocked, saying it was the youngest case they'd ever seen. But looking back, Beth and Mark, from Burscough, Lancashire, can see that opportunities to discover the cancer sooner were missed.

"Bowel cancer in younger patients is becoming more common – we don't really know why," says Willie Hamilton, professor of primary care diagnostics at the University of Exeter Medical School.

What he and his colleagues – who've teamed up with Bowel Cancer UK's Never Too Young Campaign, Durham University and University Hospital of North Tees – are certain of, is that more can be done to

ensure young people with bowel cancer get diagnosed as early as possible.

Based on research, they're launching a new risk assessment tool, published in the British Journal Of General Practice and funded by the Department of Health, designed to help GPs identify when symptoms in the under-50s might indicate a serious bowel condition, including cancer or inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's, as opposed to more common conditions like IBS. A scoring system will indicate whether the GP should simply monitor how the symptoms progress, recommend tests such as checking stool samples for signs of inflammation, or refer somebody for an urgent colonoscopy or to a specialist.

Systems like this level out the playing field too, as often symptoms can be vague, plus the severity of symptoms doesn't always reflect the seriousness of the underlying cause.

For Dave Smale, 36, who was diagnosed with stage 4 bowel cancer this January, the only symptom was stomach pain. "He started getting stomach pains, which correlated with when he'd been eating," ex-

plains his wife Katie, 31. "We later found out this was because everything was trying to come past the tumour in his bowel, it was obstructing everything. But at the time, we were racking our brains about what it could be. We thought perhaps it could be a food intolerance, or IBS."

That's what Dave's GP thought too at first. But a few months on, the pain became severe, and Dave was referred for tests. He was told he could be facing a diagnosis of Crohn's disease, but the results were far worse – cancer, that had spread to his liver and stomach lining.

Dave's already had major bowel surgery and is currently undergoing chemo, with more surgeries to come. Life's been turned upside down for the couple, but their 15-month-old daughter, Maisie, is keeping them laughing and little things, like pre-chemo date nights, plus support from family and friends is helping.

Katie's grateful Dave persisted with going back to the doctor, and says: "I think he'd started Googling about how people had been misdiagnosed with IBS and it turned out to be something worse."

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COMMERCIAL FEATURE

Discover what holiday parks have to offer at open event

A trio of parks in the heart of England are opening their gates over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend to welcome visitors who want to explore the idea of holiday home ownership.

Award-winning 'Discover Parks', is hosting a showcase weekend at each of their three sites, which all nestle beneath the rolling hills on the Herefordshire/Welsh Marches border.

Pearl Lake, the largest of the trio, is a luxury country park set around a breath-taking 15-acre glacier lake, whilst Arrow Bank is a small select park in the historical black and white village of Eardisland.

Diversity

Rockbridge Park sits in the dramatic landscape just outside the Welsh border town of Presteigne and as well as having luxury holiday homes, offers residential park homes and lodges.

Priding themselves on the variety and diversity that they offer, owners Glenn and Hannah Jones say what sets them apart from their competitors is that they can usually match most holiday home owners' needs.

"Some people want more facilities for families, whilst others want a smaller, more intimate country retreat. Within our three parks we are able to deliver on all counts!

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Pearl Lake is a luxury country park set around a 15-acre glacier lake

children's zip wire, a BMX track and a new wildlife station."

This is the first open weekend of the season and a chance for customers from across the Midlands region to view the wide range of pre-owned holiday homes, plus the latest 2017 model holiday homes and lodges on display.

Each park will be hosting events over the weekend and as they're all within 15 minutes drive of each other visitors will be able to familiarise themselves with the surrounding area.

Call in for full details or visit the website www.discoverparks.co.uk

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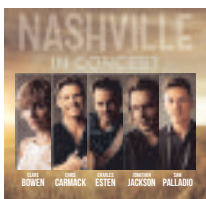
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Doreen for Mayor? No, I'm far too lazy

She's the first lady of the Black Country. Doreen Tipton, the region's pre-eminent Lazy Cow, is a crisp-eating, award-winning, panto-dazzling, loff-a-minute who'll be on the road in Wolverhampton, Walsall, Telford, Stafford, Brierley Hill and Cannock soon.

Her Grand Night Out is making its final run, her autumn show, Rise Of The Yam-Yam, is selling quicker than scratchings at a Dudley pub and she'll be back in panto at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre.

Happily, we tracked her down to Tipton - where else - to find out more about her remarkable year. This is how things went...

Doreen, first of all, congratulations on receiving two prestigious awards in the space of a week - Best Newcomer in the Great British Panto Awards in London, and then What's On readers voted you Midlands Entertainment Personality of the Year. How does it feel to be a winner?

"The panto award was a lovely surprise, and I got to meet Christopher Big Ones (Christopher Biggins), who is world-famous in tights. I couldn't remember anything that had happened the previous two months during the show, but I must have done something right.

"And the second award from What's On was even more incredible, because of who I was up against. It's an honour to be thought of in the same breath as the other four finalists. Julie Walters is a personal favourite of mine because I'm a big fan of the Harry Potter films, Bev Knight is a musical legend, and the bloke from Citizen Khan is apparently on the telly in a BBC comedy that they're really proud of, so I'm assuming he must be funny. I hadn't heard of Sir Lenny Henry, but he's obviously one to watch for the future. So yes, I feel blessed to have beaten them hands-down. But the losers have nothing to be ashamed of. They've done well to get this far."

What celebrations did you enjoy following the announcements? A packet of cheese and onion and half a Batham's, or something more exotic: a Desperate Dan pie and a pint of Lumphommer?

"Actually, I never drink on duty. Thankfully I'm never on duty, so it worked out well."

What are you working on at the moment?
"Working is probably too strong a word, but I have got several projects on the go. I'm currently in the middle of doing a short Spring tour with some final Grand Night Out shows for them that missed it first time around. Then I'm having a lie-down. We'll then be touring with a brand new show for autumn: Doreen: Rise of the Yam-Yam which is going to be epic. And along the way I'm filming a new DVD documentary called Doreen's Black Country where I tour around the area and meet some wonderful characters. I'm hoping it will be a funny and very affectionate account of our native land."

When you were growing up in Tipton, did you for a moment imagine you'd become an iconic local hero? Is there a sense of destiny about the rise and rise of the Yam-Yam?

"I'm not sure what iconic means, but if it means something nice, then yes. For too long the Black Country has lived in the shadow of neighbouring Brum, which itself has lived in the shadow of London. Nobody was taking us seriously. I hope that, through my comedy, I can finally get people to stop laughing at us."

From here, we imagine a move into politics. Will you be standing for the local council, as an MP, or seeking election as the President of another country?

"I was recently offered a job as President Trumpet's hod carrier, but at my age I thought better of it. Actually I have considered forming the Yam-Yam Party, and putting some common-sense policies in place, such as making people who break the law pay for their prison food and accommodation."

And what if they can't afford it?

"If they can't afford it, they can sell their house, like old folk have to in order to afford their care

What's sup - Doreen enjoys a pint in The Fountain Inn, Tipton



home. What's the difference? Except one's a criminal and the other isn't. I'm seriously considering becoming a tax-payer, so I can complain about how the Government spends my money. Perhaps if I do go into politics I'll start small. Isn't the West Midlands after a new Mayor?"

Do you fancy the job?
"Oh... is it a job? No then."
The vast riches that your success will have brought will have to be invested wisely, we imagine. Will you be buying property in Tipton, like The Wreck? Or will you invest in 'osses?

"So far I've invested everything into scratchcards, which offer the biggest return on your outlay. I think the scratchcard idea should be rolled out to welfare generally. For example, instead of the Government paying you housing benefit directly, which is boring, you could have a month's rent as one of the scratchcard prizes, or some child benefit, or a week's free jobseekers, and then have lots of smaller prizes of things like multi-packs of crisps, or Pringles, and lucky bags for the kids. It would also be a great way for Government to control welfare spending, so that none of it is wasted on gambling."

With such a busy schedule, we imagine the only way you keep in touch with current affairs is by reading your favourite newspaper: the Star. Why are both so brilliant?

"Because they focus on local issues, for local folk. It's all very well the mainstream media bleating on about Trumpton and Brexit and foreign

I hadn't heard of Sir Lenny Henry, but he's obviously one to watch

countries every day, but what really matters is what happens down your street - or more importantly, down my street. In fact I think the Star should have an edition solely devoted to my street. There'd be some stories for you then, I tell you. Leave me out of it though."

And finally, Doreen, have you got a message for your fans?

"Ta."
Andy Richardson
I Doreen would like to make it clear that when it comes to politics, her views don't necessarily reflect her views.

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.



Kasabian – at O2 Academy



For Crying Out Loud rockers go all intimate

Kasabian are back with an explosive new album brimming with confidence, swagger and huge tunes.

And despite their stadium rockers status, Leicester's finest will be packing out the more intimate O2 Academy on Thursday (13) as part of their low-key, ease-back-in April tour.

Their sixth album, *For Crying Out Loud*, is released on April 28. Written and produced by Kasabian wizard Serge Pizzorno, and recorded at the 'Surgery', his home city studio, the album features 12 tracks that encapsulate everything that makes Kasabian one of this country's top bands.

First single *You're In Love With A Psycho* is a big pop song with an irrepressible hook. Other highlights include the soon-to-be-summer-anthem *Bless This Acid House*, the contagious *Good Fight* and the rock

steady angst of *Ill Ray (the King)*. Lead singer Tom Meighan has never sounded so good, wrapping himself around the addictive hooks.

"I decided to give myself six weeks to write an album like they used to do back in the day and that became really inspiring," Serge recalls.

"I made sure there was no fat on anything, it was going to be classic songs, no self-indulgence.

Following the more electronic direction on 2014's *'48:13'* Kasabian were keen to make a truly great guitar album. "We wanted to make a very positive album full of hope with guitars to remind people that it's still relevant," says Serge.

Kasabian have four UK no1 albums and have sold more than 5.5 million albums worldwide. They've won a Brit, seven NME awards, four Q Awards and have headlined various festivals.

It's new Version of Me-lanie C



With her seventh album *Version Of Me* released on her own Red Girl Records label last October, former Spice Girl Melanie C is on tour this month including a gig at Birmingham's O2 Institute on Sunday.

Recorded in LA and London, *Version Of Me* is a richly textured, deeply personal album in which the Liverpoolian pop icon lays bare her life over beats, shimmering synths and strings.

It's described as Melanie as you've always known her but as you've never heard her before.

Working with longtime co-writers Peter Vettese and Adam Argyle,

alongside the young south London production duo Sons Of Sonix Melanie reckons it is the freshest, most contemporary-sounding album of her career.

"I wanted to make an album that I would listen to now," says Melanie.

"I'm not a leftfield artist, I never will be. I write pop songs, but my aim this time was to approach every aspect of them differently, to be more creative with structure and sounds."

The funky first single *Anytime* was released last year and sits alongside other album highlights including the synth-heavy *Dear Life*, the fusion of R&B and house beats on *Room For Love*, the strings-drenched title track and brutal album closer *Blame*.

The 43-year-old singer and actress from Merseyside, Melanie Chisholm first found fame in the 1990 as Mel C, AKA Sporty Spice, one of the five Spice Girls, who cause the biggest British pop phenomenon since Beatlemania.

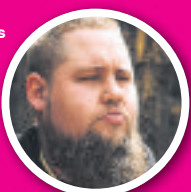
They were at the forefront of 'Girl Power' and 'Cool Britannia's British pop and youth culture seemed on the way to world domination via the pop music scene. Since going solo back in 1999, Melanie C has enjoyed two number 1 singles, six top 10 singles and more than three million album sales.

Melanie C has released a single from the new album. *Hold On* it features Alex Francis, who will also be her support at the Digbeth gig.

Rag 'n' Bone Man in tour sell-out

Rory Graham, AKA Rag 'n' Bone Man, has sold out his UK tour including his April 24 show at Birmingham's O2 Institute. That's not surprising considering his breakthrough hit *Human* is already being talked of in terms of a classic.

The success of *Human* around the globe follows years of performing. At the age of 15 he started rapping in his hometown of Uckfield and then at 19 started singing at local blues nights, then he joined Brighton hip-hop crew The Rum Committee.



70-year celebration for master of farce

Writer, director and master of farce Ray Cooney is celebrating 70 years in showbusiness. Starting out as a teenaged actor in the 1940s - "I wanted to be Olivier, or even Danny Kaye because I loved comedy," he says - he became a top comedy playwright, much in demand after his *Run For Your Wife* ran in the West End for eight years.

The celebrations of his remarkable career are under way with an updated version of one of his favourite farces *Out Of Order*, which comes on tour to Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre from Monday to Saturday, April 15.

The cast includes Shaun Williamson from *EastEnders* and *Extras*, Sue Holderness (*Marlene in Only Fools & Horses*) and James Holmes (*Miranda*).

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CHOICE



Hazel Irvine

Golf: The Masters Live (BBC2, 7.30pm)

Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the third day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year continues. Jordan Spieth was the defending champion here last year and seemed destined to retain his crown as he led at the end of the third round, despite a one-over par 73 that saw him finish day three just one stroke clear of compatriot Smylie Kaufman. Danny Willett was tied for fifth and the leading European contender, though few would have expected the man from Sheffield to claim the first Major of his career as Spieth collapsed on day four. With commentary by Peter Alliss, Ken Brown, Paul Azinger and Andrew Cotter.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Everyday. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.10** Live Davis Cup Tennis. France v Great Britain. **4.30** Final Score. **5.15** Film: Madagascar; Escape 2 Africa. (2008) Animated comedy sequel, with the voice of Ben Stiller.

6.35 BBC News.

6.45 **Regional Programme.**

6.50 **Pointless Celebrities.** Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present a music edition of the celebrity general knowledge quiz, with contestants Mick Foster, Tony Allen, Pauline Black, Harvey, Jonathan Ansell, Faryl Smith, Lee Latchford-Evans and Michelle Heaton trying to come up with the least likely correct answers to a series of questions posed to members of the public.

7.40 **Who Dares Wins.** Game show in which two pairs of complete strangers team up, each battling to outdo the other by listing as much as they know about a given subject. Last in the series.

8.25 **Casualty.** Connie makes an effort to show how much she cares on Grace's birthday. David returns for his first day back, and Robyn worries there is something wrong with baby Charlotte.

9.15 **All Round to Mrs Brown's.** Mrs Brown's Boys creator, writer and star Brendan O'Carroll dons Agnes's famous cardigan and curlers for another edition of the Saturday night chat show. Filmed in front of a live studio audience, the irreverent Irish matriarch invites friends, family and celebrity guests to join her in the sitting room as she stages mischievous stunts, and gives her visitors a piece of her mind.

10.15 **BBC News;** Weather; National Lottery Update.

10.30 **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Bournemouth v Chelsea at the Vitality Stadium and Manchester City v Hull City.

11.55 **Film: I Am Number Four.** (2011) A teenager with special powers becomes a fugitive from aliens determined to hunt him down and destroy him. Sci-fi thriller, starring Alex Pettyfer.

1.40 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.45** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 **Film: Tinker Bell and the Secret of the Wings.** (2012) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Mae Whitman. **7.15** **Film: G-Force.** (2009) Children's adventure, starring Bill Nighy. **8.35** **Film: Shark Tale.** (2004) Animated comedy, with the voice of Will Smith. **10.00** **Natural World: The Bat Man** of Mexico. (R) **11.00** **Homes Under the Hammer.** (R) **12.00** **Raymond Blanc: How to Cook Well.** (R) **12.30** **The Best Dishes Ever.** (R) **1.00** **Golf: The Masters Highlights.** **2.00** **Flog It!** (R) **3.00** **University Challenge.** (R) **3.30** **Only Connect.** Victoria Coren Mitchell hosts the final, in which the two most successful teams vie to make connections between things that initially do not appear to be linked. Last in the series. (R) **4.00** **Gardeners' World.** Monty Don starts to plant up his new fruit garden and also addresses his need for summer flowering bulbs. Carol Klein chooses the primrose as her plant of the month. (R) **4.30** **Live Davis Cup Tennis.** France v Great Britain. Sue Barker introduces further coverage of the second day of the World Group quarter-final, featuring the doubles rubber at the Kindarena in Rouen. **5.30** **Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby.** Giles Coren and Monica Galetti join the staff working in some of the most unusual hotels around the world, learning the tricks of the trade. (R) **6.30** **Hotel Armadillo: Natural World.** The giant armadillo, an animal so elusive few have ever seen it wild in the Brazilian wetlands region known as the Pantanal. David Attenborough reveals how the burrows the armadillos dig create homes for hundreds of other animals. Until recently man knew virtually nothing of this species, but Arnaud Desbiez, the founder of the Giant Armadillo Project, has changed all that. (R) **7.30** **Golf: The Masters Live.** Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the third day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year continues.

12.00 **Film: Ilo Ilo.** (2013) A Filipino maid in Singapore becomes a firm friend to the family she works for, but a financial crisis threatens her future. Drama, with Yann Yann Yee and Tian Wen Chen. **1.35** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC Two. **8.35** **An Island Parish.** Rosie Guille organises a visit from artists to capture the beauty of the island and lay preacher Karen Le Mouton considers leaving to pursue ordination training. (R)

ITV

6.00 **CITV: Bottom Knockers Street.** **6.10** **Bottom Knockers Street.** (R) **6.25** **Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures.** (R) **6.35** **Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures.** (R) **6.45** **Sooty.** (R) **6.55** **Signed Stories: Share a Story.** (R) **7.00** **Outdoors.** (R) **7.05** **Thunderbirds Are Go.** (R) **7.30** **Scrambled!: Scrambled!** **7.35** **Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series.** (R) **7.50** **Scrambled!: NinjaGo: Masters of Spinjitzu.** (R) **8.20** **Scrambled!: Horrid Henry.** (R) **8.45** **Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go!** **9.05** **Scrambled!: Adventure Time.** (R) **9.25** **Alphabetical.** (R) **10.25** **James Martin's French Adventure.** (R) **11.25** **Best Walks with a View with Julia Bradbury.** (R) **12.00** **ITV News; Weather.** **12.10** **Film: Carry On at Your Convenience.** (1971) Comedy, starring Sid James. **2.00** **ITV Racing – Grand National Festival.** Ed Chamberlin presents live coverage of four races from Aintree. **4.35** **ITV Racing Live: The Grand National.** Coverage of today's race meetings.

6.10 **Regional Programme;** Weather.

6.20 **ITV News;** Weather.

6.30 **You've Been Framed! Gold.** Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring everything from cute kids and crazy animals to pranks and painful-looking accidents. (R) **7.00** **Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway.** The popular duo's entertainment show bows out once in a live finale from Disney World, Florida. The pair will be making sure to end things in a suitably extravagant manner. Co-hosts Scarlet Moffatt and Stephen Mulhern will no doubt be giving fans on the street and in the studio a chance to be part of the action, and Emilia Fox aims to bring the case of The Missing Crown Jewels to a close, as this series' comedy sketch whodunit concludes. Last in the series.

8.30 **An Evening with Take That.** A performance by the pop group, featuring new material and special versions of some of their most popular hits in front of an audience of fans from across Europe.

9.35 **Film: King Kong.** (2005) Peter Jackson's remake of the fantasy adventure, with Naomi Watts.

10.35 **ITV News;** Weather.

10.45 **Film: King Kong.** (2005) Concluded.

1.15 **Jackpot247.** **3.00** **Who's Doing the Dishes?** (R) **3.50** **ITV Nightscreen.**

CHANNEL 4

6.20 **Mobil 1 The Grid.** **6.45** **The King of Queens.** (R) **7.10** **The King of Queens.** (R) **7.40** **Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **8.05** **Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **8.30** **Frasier.** (R) **9.00** **Frasier.** (R) **9.30** **The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **10.00** **The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **10.25** **The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **10.55** **The Simpsons.** (R) **11.25** **The Simpsons.** (R) **11.55** **The Simpsons.** (R) **12.25** **Extreme Food.** **1.00** **Formula 1 Chinese Grand Prix Qualifying Highlights.** **2.30** **A Place in the Sun: Summer Sun.** (R) **3.30** **Location, Location, Location.** (R) **4.30** **Grand Designs.** (R) **5.35** **Channel 4 News.**

6.05 **Escape to the Chateau.** Dick Strawbridge and Angel Adoree continue their renovation of a French chateau. The couple arrange to host weddings to pay for the work, and invest in solar power. (R) **7.00** **Penelope Keith at Her Majesty's Service.** The actress visits Hillsborough Castle, the Queen's official residence in Northern Ireland. She discovers the daily routine of the household staff during a royal visit, and flicks through a scrapbook of mementos dating back to 1925, which provides an insight into how life in the royal family has changed over the years. She also meets the Queen's bugler, finds an unexpected treasure from the 1953 coronation tour and discovers how in 2012, the Queen played a simple but vital role in uniting two fractured communities in Enniskillen simply by crossing the road. (R) **8.00** **Film: Battleship.** (2012) A reckless slacker joins the Navy, hoping to win the respect of his girlfriend's father, a stern admiral. He and his shipmates are put to the ultimate test as part of a force of vessels that must battle an invading fleet of powerful alien spaceships. Sci-fi adventure, starring Taylor Kitsch, Liam Neeson and Alexander Skarsgard. Edited for language and violence.

10.35 **Film: Dredd.** (2012) A law enforcer in a post-apocalyptic city must fight his way out of a tower block dominated by a ruthless crime lord. Sci-fi thriller, starring Karl Urban and Lena Headey.

12.25 **Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.** (R) **1.15** **Million Pound Motors.** (R) **2.10** **Hollyoaks.** (R) **4.15** **Phil Spencer: Secret Agent.** (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 **Milkshake!** **10.05** **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** **10.40** **Access.** **10.50** **Police Interceptors: Unleashed.** (R) **11.20** **Police Interceptors.** (R) **12.20** **Police Interceptors.** (R) **1.20** **On Benefits: Life on the Dole.** (R) **2.20** **On Benefits: Life on the Dole.** (R) **3.20** **On Benefits: Life on the Dole.** (R) **4.20** **Nightmare Tenants.** **5.15** **Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** (R) **6.10** **Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** Agents chase more than £1,700 in unpaid parking fines in south-east London, but struggle to pinpoint the debtor. Meanwhile, officers in north Wales try to recover the £2,000 owed by a tradesman to a former employer, and in Kent agencies chase £8,000 owed by a jewellery shop to two former employees. (R) **7.10** **NCIS: Los Angeles.** Part one of two. Kensi is taken into custody as chief suspect in the murder of Marine Sergeant Chris Black, but fancies her chances of catching the real killer herself. **8.00** **NCIS.** The Secretary of the Navy's daughter is kidnapped, and the NCIS crew teams up with the FBI to track the case, determine a motive and bring her the abducted girl home. **8.55** **5 News Weekend.** **9.00** **Football on 5: The Championship.** George Riley and Lynsey Higrave introduce highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Norwich City v Reading and Sheffield Wednesday v Newcastle United. **10.00** **Football on 5: Goal Rush.** George Riley and Lynsey Higrave introduce all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including AFC Wimbledon v Bristol Rovers and Blackpool v Grimsby Town. **10.30** **The Funny Side of Love and Sex.** Johnny Vegas, Nish Kumar and Nina Wadia are among the celebrities and comedy stars offering their opinions on the many weird habits people put up with while "in relationships". **11.30** **Comedy Pinnouchs with Russell Kane.** Ian Stone introduces a stand-up performance by the writer and comedian on topical themes. **11.55** **Access.** **12.00** **SuperCasino.** **3.10** **Inside St Paul's Cathedral.** (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 **The Silk Road** **8.00** **Dust Storm** **8.45** **Wild Scotland** **9.00** **Film: Department O: The Keeper Of Lost Causes** (2013) **10.30** **Top of the Pops: 1983** **11.40** **Psychedelic Britannia** **12.45** **Totally 60s** **Psychedelic Rock at the BBC** **1.45** **Pink Floyd Beginnings: 1967 – 1972** **2.45** **Psychedelic Britannia** **3.45** **Close**

ITV2

11.15 **Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway** **11.15** **Britain's Got Talent: Stephen's Top 10 Unbelievable Talents** **1.45** **You've Been Framed!** **Gold** **2.15** **Hairspray Live!** **4.45** **Film: The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement** (2004) **5.45** **FYI Daily** **5.50** **Film: The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement** (2004) **7.00** **Scorpion** **8.00** **Film: Burlesque** (2010) **9.00** **FYI Daily** **9.05** **Film: Burlesque** (2010) **10.35** **Celebrity Juice** **11.15** **Family Guy** **12.40** **American Dad!** **1.40** **The Cleveland Show** **2.05** **Ibiza Weekender** **2.50** **Teleshopping** **5.50** **ITV2 Nightscreen**

ITV3

11.45 **Heidi** **1.50** **Agatha Christie's Marple** **3.55** **Rosemary & Thyme** **4.55** **Endeavour** **7.00** **Lewis** **11.00** **Les Dawson Forever** **12.00** **Colditz** **2.00** **ITV3 Nightscreen** **3.00** **Teleshopping**

ITV4

11.30 **The Virtual Grand National** **2017** **12.00** **Pawn Stars** **1.25** **British Touring Car Championship Highlights** **2.55** **Film: The Alamo** (1960) **3.55** **FYI Daily** **4.00** **Film: The Alamo** (1960) **6.05** **It's Not Rocket Science** **7.10** **Fierce** **8.15** **Film: Jackie Chan's First Strike** (1996) **9.15** **FYI Daily** **9.20** **Film: Jackie Chan's First Strike** (1996) **10.00** **Film: Rambo: First Blood Part II** (1985) **11.00** **FYI Daily** **11.05** **Film: Rambo: First Blood Part II** (1985) **12.05** **Film: Renegades** (1989) **1.05** **FYI Daily** **1.10** **Film: Renegades** (1989) **2.10** **Hogan's Heroes** **2.40** **ITV4 Nightscreen** **3.00** **Teleshopping**

E4

2.30 **The Goldbergs** **5.00** **The Big Bang Theory** **9.00** **Film: Transporter 2** (2005) **10.45** **Gogglebox** **12.55** **Rude Tube: Heroes and Villains** **2.00** **Naked Attraction** **2.55** **Marvel's Agents of SHIELD** **3.40** **The Goldbergs** **4.00** **Baby Daddy** **5.05** **How I Met Your Mother**

Film4

1.00 **Ferris Bueller's Day Off** (1986) **3.05** **Dragonball Evolution** (2009) **4.45** **Tooth Fairy** (2010) **6.55** **Tower Heist** (2011) **9.00** **The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 2** (2012) **11.15** **An American Werewolf in London** (1981) **1.15** **Isolation** (2005) **3.10** **Close**

Tasty and healthy start to the year at Bangla Lounge

Commercial feature

INDIAN restaurant Bangla Lounge has been a popular fixture on Halesowen's High Street for more than a decade, attracting a loyal clientele with its mouth-watering range of traditional favourites and in-house specialities.

Head chef Abdul Ahad, who has worked for manager Bari Azad and his family for more than 20 years, continues to bring creative flair to traditional dishes as well as creating his own delicious specialities.

Recent additions to the extensive menu include lamb curry which is slow cooked with garlic and ginger.

There are plenty of options for vegetarians and for fish lovers including salmon, prawn and white fish.

Offer

Mr Azad said: "Because people traditionally like to keep a tight rein on their purses and wallets in January, we're introducing a new offer on Friday and Saturday evenings when diners can enjoy any starter, any main course, rice or naan, or vegetable dish plus ice cream and coffee for just £13.95. This offer is available for a limited period only."

Diners visiting on any evening between Sunday and Thursday can enjoy a two-for-one offer on main courses (eat in only, terms and conditions apply).

Bangla Lounge is aware that some weight conscious diners will be aiming to shed a few pounds in early 2017 and will be serving wholemeal bread and rice on request plus lower fat dishes.

The friendly staff are more than happy to



The stylish interior of popular Halesowen restaurant Bangla Lounge, where new dishes have been added to the menu

advise on the healthier options that are available on the menu.

If you are planning a celebration in 2017, the restaurant's upstairs function room, which can cater for up to 40

diners, is a popular venue for work parties, birthdays and anniversaries. Call to discuss your exact requirements.

Takeaways are also available for a 20 per cent discount and free home

delivery within a three mile radius of the restaurant.

For more details, or to book a table, call 0121 585 7020 or visit www.banglaloungehalesowen.co.uk



Bangla Lounge is a popular fixture on Halesowen's High Street

DIGITAL




FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Hummingbird, Channel 5, 11pm
A haunted special forces soldier returns to London from Afghanistan and assumes another man's identity, hoping to make a fresh start. He is drawn into the city's criminal underworld, where his skills prove valuable to the highest bidder, and plots revenge against the gangster who killed his girlfriend. Crime thriller, with Jason Statham and Agata Buzek. (2013)

TUESDAY
No Strings Attached, BBC1, 11.35pm
Two childhood friends run into each other and end up sleeping together. Neither of them is interested in committing to a relationship, so they agree to keep things purely sexual. But despite their best efforts, they start to fall in love. Romantic comedy, starring Natalie Portman, Ashton Kutcher, Kevin Kline and Cary Elwes. (2011)



Selma, Friday, BBC2, 9pm

WEDNESDAY
Deadly Daycare, Channel 5, 3.20pm
A divorcee suspects nursery staff of mistreating her young daughter. When the girl's increasingly awkward behaviour arouses suspicion, the mother plants a hidden camera on the premises and discovers why the owner may hold a grudge against her. Thriller, starring Kayla Ewell. (2014)

THURSDAY
Independence Daysaster, Channel 5, 3.15pm
America's fourth of July celebrations are abruptly interrupted when Earth is invaded by hostile aliens. A maverick scientist and a small-town firefighter join forces to find and activate the only piece of technology in the world that can destroy the extraterrestrial army. Sci-fi thriller, starring Ryan Merriman. (2013)

FRIDAY
Selma, BBC2, 9pm
In 1965, amidst an atmosphere of racial unrest, civil rights campaigner Dr Martin Luther King Jr plans a peaceful march across Alabama from Selma to Montgomery. His goal is to persuade President Lyndon B Johnson to change the law, allowing black people to register to vote. Fact-based drama, starring David Oyelowo and Carmen Ejogo. (2014)

Returning series sees Peter back in the driving seat

Sometimes the best ideas are simple ones.

That's certainly the case for sitcoms anyway. Some of the greats have had a very straightforward premise. Steppe and Son was set mainly in a scrapyard, Basil and Sybil never set foot outside the grounds of Fawley Towers and Father Ted was confined (mostly) to Craggy Island.

Peter Kay's Car Share follows in their footsteps by keeping the 'action' contained inside the car of assistant supermarket manager John Redmond's red Fiat 500L.

However, it didn't take its inspiration from any of the aforementioned programmes, but rather Roger & Val Have Just Got In, an underrated gem of a bittersweet comedy which aired for two series between 2010 and 2012. Alfred Molina and Dawn French played the central characters whose lives were unravelled during the half-hour following their return home from work.

Co-writers Tim Reid and Paul

Coleman also drew from the Bafta-winning sitcom The Smoking Room, which was cancelled after its premise - discussions between co-workers using an area set aside by their company for nicotine addicts - was made redundant by the 2007 smoking ban.

Although Car Share's most famous participant is Peter Kay, it really doesn't belong to him. As mentioned above, it was Reid and Coleman's idea, although Kay and co-star Sian Gibson contribute to the scripts, and it would, admittedly, be difficult to imagine the series without them.

Gibson was largely unknown before the series aired. She first met Kay when they studied together at Salford University; he later cast her in Comedy Lab, That Peter Kay Thing, Phoenix Nights and Britain's Got the Pop Factor... It was she who brought the initial scripts to Kay, but hadn't expected to appear in it until he asked her to get involved - in fact, she hadn't auditioned for any acting roles for a year, and was working in a call

centre instead.

If anything, Gibson is the real star of the show. It's turned her into a star, offering her a chance to demonstrate her not inconsiderable comedic talents - it can only be a matter of time before she has her own vehicle (pardon the pun).

She's certainly thrilled to be back in the passenger seat: "I'm really excited that Car Share is coming back. We had so much fun making the first series and I can't wait to be Kayleigh Kitson again."

Kayleigh is, of course, a promotions rep at the store where John works, and they were thrown together by a scheme encouraging car sharing between co-workers.

Although Kay is used to success, even he was surprised by how well the show was received: "The success of the first series has been completely overwhelming," he says.

The end of the previous run saw the duo grow ever-closer, and there was a hint of romance in the air. Will they be an item when we meet up with them again?



Peter Kay's Car Share, Tuesday, BBC1, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

Rock The Musical will be wowing the masses, and there's a performance from Matthew Bourne's The Red Shoes.

WEDNESDAY
Rhod Gilbert's Work Experience BBC2, 10pm

New series. The presenter returns to try out more alternative careers, and begins by taking to the streets of Cwmbran to learn the business of selling houses. Although we know Rhod has the gift of the gab, Gavin, his new mentor, believes happy people sell, placing extra pressure on the grumpy comedian. Will Rhod's unique approach prove to be an asset in the high-octane sales environment and make him employee of the month, or will he have the potential home buyers running scared?

THURSDAY
The World According to Kids BBC2, 8pm

New series. Children aged between six and 11 from across the UK are equipped with cameras to reveal what they really think of the world, while a number of challenges offer an intimate insight into how

they think. In the opening show, children from a debating club in Bradford, a pony club in Berkshire and a drama class in Gloucester explore their feelings of love and hate. Eight-year-old Abigail discusses her parents' impending wedding. Daniel is looking forward to seeing his father - who has been posted overseas with the Army - and Edmund just loves to hate his little sister.

FRIDAY
Last Days of Jesus Channel 5, 6.05pm

Back in 2004, gospel accounts of Jesus' crucifixion formed the inspiration for Mel Gibson's film, The Passion of the Christ. The movie sparked enormous controversy for how it portrayed Jesus' death, but piecing together what happened during his final week is a task that has puzzled scholars for



Tony Robinson: Coast to Coast, Friday, Channel 5, 8pm

centuries. This documentary asks what could have triggered the crucifixion, and reveals the events that may have sparked Jesus' religious movement, including the death of John the Baptist and an increasing resentment among the people towards Rome. It also examines how power was shifting in the highest reaches of the Roman empire.

Tony Robinson: Coast to Coast Channel 5, 8pm

The presenter reaches the North Yorkshire Moors and takes to the skies for a bird's-eye view of the journey ahead from the cockpit of a glider from the Sutton Bank gliding club. Back on the ground, he admires the ruins of Rievaulx Abbey and learns the tale of power and greed that eventually brought down the monastery. In the orchards of Ampleforth Abbey, where rare heritage varieties are grown to produce juice and cider, Tony discovers a secret that evokes vivid memories of his childhood.

Lethal Weapon ITV, 9pm

As Riggs and Murtaugh examine the murder of one of LA's fashion expeditors, they follow a trail of evidence that leads them to a dangerous underground investigation led by the DEA. Clayne Crawford and Damon Wayans star.

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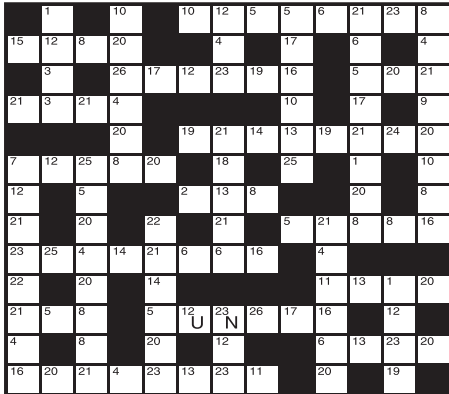
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No.424

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

K	P	Z	I	F	G	A	W	D	R	H	J	Y
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Q	T	E	U	M	N	B	X	V	C	L	S	O

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

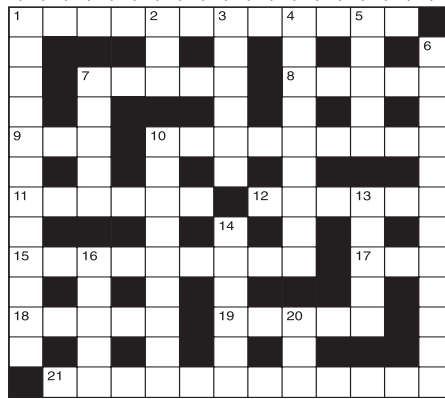
Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. First job involves race at the beginning (8,4)
7. Snake on street gets crow (5)
8. The vehicle will travel as freight (5)
9. Where part of the foot points? (3)
10. Where a prisoner's feelings are registered? (5,4)
11. A knotty problem when medicine is missing (6)
12. Could become silent to give ear (6)
15. Gains fare for travelling on the ocean (9)
17. Vapour given off in making a simple substance (3)
18. No lag lengthwise (5)
19. Animal to take the wheel (5)
21. Give exercise to show practice follows preaching (3,2,7)

Down

1. Filming leading lady with heavenly body? (8,4)
2. Beverage made from waste apples (3)
3. Character of wicked aunt again shown (6)
4. Choose to get in wrong set when supporting strike (9)
5. Be useful and set ball in play (5)
6. Strong, ill disturbed one is no moss gatherer (7,5)
7. About fifty become more flexible and mix well (5)
10. Got a snail to show sentimental feeling (9)
13. Stripes not on an NCO's uniform (5)
14. It's out to take to court for material (6)
16. No ale when unaccompanied (5)
20. A long time in the rain (3)



Quick Clues:

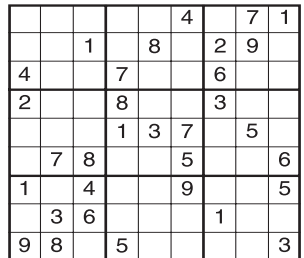
Across

1. Heartbroken (12)
7. Black (5)
8. Collier (5)
9. Trap (3)
10. Indifference (9)
11. Unmask (6)
12. Powerful (6)
15. Withdrew (9)
17. Reverential fear (3)
18. Dense (5)
19. Likeness (5)
21. Reinforced (12)

Down

1. Break up (12)
2. Globe (3)
3. Diction (6)
4. In layers (9)
5. Strained (5)
6. Sinned (12)
7. Establish (3,2)
10. Liberate (9)
13. Declaim (5)
14. Twine (6)
16. Corrupt (5)
20. Tree (3)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	6	8	1	7	9	4	5	3
5	3	4	2	6	8	9	7	1
1	7	9	3	5	4	8	2	6
6	8	1	4	9	5	2	3	7
3	2	5	7	6	1	8	4	9
4	9	7	6	3	2	5	1	8
8	5	3	9	1	6	2	4	7
9	1	2	8	4	7	3	6	5
7	4	6	5	2	3	1	8	9

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 4 Advance; 8 Osiers; 9 Avance; 10 Filter; 11 Detour; 12 Negative; 18 Medicine; 20 Groove; 21 Plates; 22 Intense; 23 Entree; 24 Seconds. Down: 1 Roofing; 2 Vintage; 3 Ardent; 5 Dividend; 6 Aerate; 7 Cactus; 13 Immersed; 14 Distort; 15 Measles; 16 Fringe; 17 Toledo; 19 Island.
QUICK - Across: 4 Dispute; 8 Emblem; 9 Assault; 10 Foeman; 11 Accent; 12 Devotion; 18 Free-will; 20 Debate; 21 Latent; 22 Javelin; 23 Person; 24 Century. Down: 1 Perfidy; 2 Observe; 3 Tenant; 5 Instance; 6 Prance; 7 Talent; 13 Inferior; 14 Disease; 15 Blatant; 16 Decade; 17 Patent; 19 Elated.

Quiz

1. What was captured from Spain by admiral George Rooke in 1704?
2. In which sport is the annual Stanley Cup contested?
3. With which instrument is Keith Jarrett associated?
4. Which Bond film features a Louis Armstrong hit song?
5. What do the letters UHT stand for?
6. Of which country is Karachi the largest city?
7. In Greek mythology, who tried to bring Eurydice back from the dead?
8. Niacin belongs to which group of vitamins?
9. Which dog was first bred as the 'imperial lion dog'?
10. Which English garden designer coined the term 'landscape gardening'?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Hendrik Verwoerd; 2 Trampolining; 3 Carson City; 4 A deer; 5 George Martin; 6 Literature; 7 Lincolnshire; 8 Thomas Edison; 9 The RAC Rally; 10 Vaclav Havel.
Niner: NOURISHED

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

3755478
48925
7817371645

gives a bad person,
gives a good person,
gives a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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Note that new Tenerife cool vibe

TENERIFE'S sleepy landscape is changing. If you head to the island, you may need to pack your party heels to investigate the island's cool new vibe. . .

Eyeing up Elton John's multi-coloured feathery showman costume and a skimpy gold Britney Spears number, I wonder if I've underdressed for dinner.

These 100-plus pieces of memorabilia are all part of the furniture at Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife, where music legends are brought to life at every turn. Tracy Chapman lyrics line the wall, countless iconic instruments dangle from ceilings, and even the disabled toilet sign has been tweaked to carry a guitar and 'rock on' hand symbol.

HRH Tenerife opened on the sunny southern coast near Adeje late last year, and true to its name, it's rocking the sleepy side of Tenerife as we know it. Think live gigs and DJ sessions with a set list to rival Ibiza, played out on a 5,000-capacity stage boasting a view of the Atlantic.

Music makers can upgrade their DIY jam sessions in the Rock Royalty penthouse suites, or dial in room service for a pop-up studio Fender electric guitar and amp (headphones provided so you don't wake the neighbours).

OBSESSED

Popstar Shakira's T-shirt is displayed right outside my hotel room and I become obsessed with a Beatles photography exhibit – a collection of 11 super-cool vacation snaps from 1963 taken in Tenerife before the band rocketed to fame. A month later, Please Please Me went to number one for 30 weeks.

We experience the hotel's first ever monthly Children Of The 80s open-air night where we dance (jacket-free in December) to live performances of Black Box's Ride

Time to relax at the lovely pool bar at Hard Rock



Dancing along at opening night of Children of the 80s



on Time and C+C Music Factory's Gonna Make You Sweat in a sea of neon leotards and OTT Eighties wigs. It doesn't feel anything like the Tenerife my mum told me about. . .

Tenerife's southern coast revamp has seen a boost to its nightlife in recent years, with hotspots like the lively Monkey Beach Club and the chic Papagayo Beach Club, both at Troya Beach where you can watch the Canarian sunset with cocktails – and then party on after-dark.

But it isn't all dancing 'til the small hours in Tenerife. On our visit, we blow away the morning-after hangover

blues with a visit to the breathtaking Teide National Park, where we explore the stark volcanic landscape that attracts five million visitors per year. So good in fact, it's been the backdrop for films like Clash of the Titans and Fast & Furious 6.

My head for heights is challenged when we climb 3,718 metres above sea level in a cable car practically to the summit of Mount Teide, Spain's highest peak, where Tenerife's temperatures suddenly drop, along with the air pressure. The trade-off is the breathtaking, Instagram-worthy views. The scene back at HRH

Tenerife isn't all monochrome mosaic pools with underwater music (though that is pretty epic). Beach fans will find both volcanic black sand and soft white sand in the secluded surrounding bays, if you ever want a break from the hotel's playlist.

Tenerife's newest uber-hotel (two tower blocks bathed in flickering lights at night) is different to its global sister hotels, insists Matt Watts, director of music and marketing for Hard Rock International: "It's not 'in your face' like our Vegas hotel. The vibe is more feel-good and subdued."

LISA HAYNES

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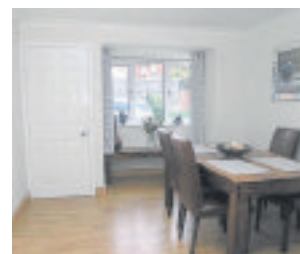
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This one-bedroomed flat for sale in Jockey Fields, Upper Gornal, Dudley, is a modern first-floor property in an established location.

Also having a study/nursery room, it is for sale through Wakeman at £65,000.

Its accommodation comprises an entrance hall, a landing, a living room, a kitchen, bedroom, a study/nursery room, and communal grounds. The property can be found midway between Sedgley and Dudley, being convenient for a wide range of amenities.

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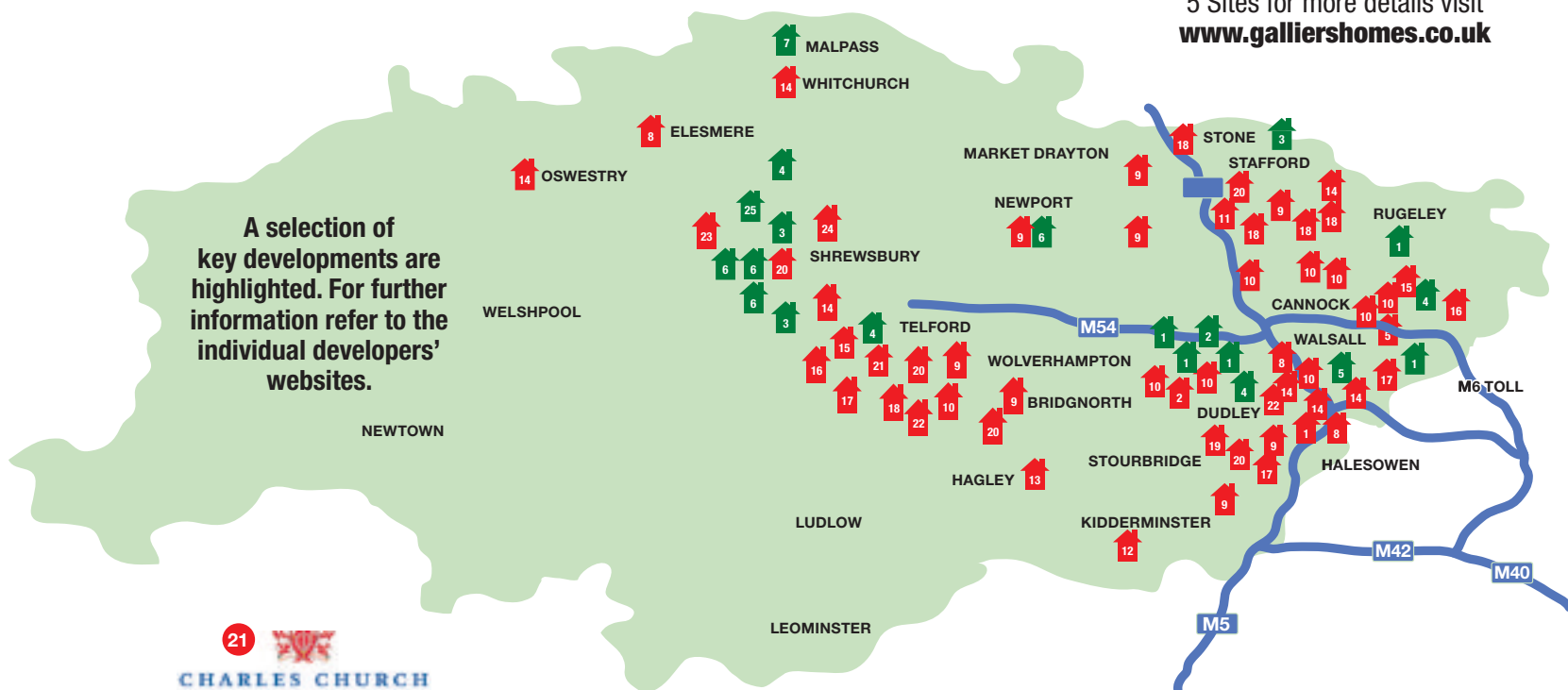


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Borrowers with smaller deposit making up larger share of market

Home buyers needing small deposits are making up a larger share of the property market with the latest figures showing they account for more than a fifth of all new mortgage approvals.

In total home borrowers with a deposit of 15 per cent or less made up 20.5 per cent of the market in February, substantially higher than both the previous month and the same point last year, according to the Mortgage Monitor report from residential surveyors e.surv.

Last month, these borrowers took 18.7 per cent of the mortgage market and in February 2016 they represented 15.7 per cent of all house purchase loans granted and the report points out that this growth came despite the overall number of house purchase approvals dropping slightly between January and February.

Overall there were 66,911 loans approved in February, down from 67,430 in January and down 7.4 per cent compared to the same point in 2016.

"Buyers with smaller deposits are growing in number as more people get themselves onto the property ladder.

"The new year started in a positive fashion and this trend has continued into February," said Richard Sexton, director of e.surv chartered surveyors.

"This may be because mortgage lenders are now more receptive to first time buyers, but also could be the number of government housing schemes helping people save for their deposit to buy a home," he explained.

Positive

But he pointed out that despite this positive performance, the market for first time buyers and those with small deposits still needs support.

"These buyers are the key to housing chains, allowing others to sell on and move up the ladder. It will be interesting to see what trends develop as the year progresses," Sexton added.

The data also shows that the proportion of loans made to home buyers with large deposits dipped below 35 per cent in February but these borrowers continue to outstrip their small deposit counterparts.

Larger deposit borrowers, defined as those with a deposit of 60 per cent or more, made up 34.7 per cent of the market in February, below the 35.4 per cent of all mortgage approvals recorded in January and continues a general trend away from large deposit borrowers in recent months.

"These figures show that while the number of small deposit buyers obtaining mortgage finance has increased, this segment of the market remains in the shadow of those borrowers with larger sums," Sexton said.

"However, with many big banks fighting over this segment of the market, some challenger lenders have refocused their attention towards first-time buyers.

"The range of products available for borrowers with a small deposit has increased significantly in recent years, allowing more and more people to achieve their housing aspirations," he added.

Brokers report a three-year high in mortgage accessibility

Mortgage accessibility in the UK has reached a three-year high with first-time buyer and home owners remortgaging markets having the best prospects for growth in the rest of 2017.

The latest figures from the Intermediary Mortgage Lenders Association (IMLA) shows that a record 30 per cent of mortgage brokers had no problem sourcing a mortgage for any client type in the preceding six months.

Meanwhile, rate of brokers unable to source a mortgage for first-time buyers almost halved to 16 per cent with the positive outlook coming despite the introduction of the Mortgage Market Review (MMR) in April 2014 which introduced stricter criteria for borrowers.

The number of brokers with no problem sourcing a mortgage for any type of client in the second half of 2016 was up from 26 per cent in the first half of the year, and double the rate recorded a year earlier in the first half of 2015 when it was just 15 per cent.

Improving

The IMLA says that this is a clear reflection of improving lending conditions and a sign of the continually strengthening relationship between mortgage lenders and brokers.

Brokers also reported an uptick in successfully sourcing mortgages for a variety of different groups of borrowers. The rate of brokers who said they were unable to source a mortgage for first time buyers fell from 29 per cent in the first half of 2016 to 16 per cent in the second half of the year, while the proportion who were unable to source a mortgage for standard status borrowers also fell from 26 per cent to 15 per cent over the same period.

Conditions were also reported to be softening for borrowers who sit outside of the mainstream mortgage market. The rate of brokers who were unable to secure a mortgage for borrowers who are self-employed or have irregular incomes fell from 50 per cent in the first half of 2016 to 25 per cent in the second half, while the



rate for those unable to source mortgages for interest-only borrowers fell from 52 per cent to 31 per cent.

There was also a substantial fall in the rate of brokers who were unable to source a mortgage for borrowers looking for mortgages lasting into retirement, which fell from 43 per cent in the first half of the year to 29 per cent.

The increase in brokers successfully sourcing mortgages for a greater proportion of clients is set against a backdrop of falling average mortgage rates. The Bank of England reported that the average two-year fixed rate mortgage at 75 per cent loan to value (LTV) fell 45 basis points (bps) from 1.9 per cent to 1.45 per cent between December 2015 and December 2016, enhancing consumers' affordability.

"It is hugely encouraging to see a greater

number of brokers are reporting that they are successfully arranging mortgages for a wide variety of clients. Over the past few years, regulations like the MMR have raised the bar in terms of borrowers' requirements, which some predicted would leave many borrowers locked out of the market," said Peter Williams, IMLA executive director.

"This new regulatory regime has made the intermediary channel more important than ever, and brokers are clearly doing a great job of helping people get a foot on the housing ladder. House prices have been growing faster than incomes over the past few years, which has challenged affordability," he pointed out.

"This issue has been particularly acute among first time buyers, which means the fact that just 16 per cent of brokers reported they were unable to source a

mortgage for someone in this group over the six months is very positive news. Low mortgage rates have continued to support borrowers' affordability by reducing monthly payments," he added.

According to the IMLA's research, both lenders and brokers alike viewed the remortgage market as having the best prospects for growth in 2017, followed by lending to first time buyers.

The remortgage market has grown considerably over the past year, with home owners looking to tap into growing equity and to take advantage of the low rates available to them on the market. According to the Council of Mortgage Lender's latest data, home owner remortgage activity increased by 22 per cent in value from £5.8 billion to £7.1 billion and 21 per cent in volume from 33,200 customers to 40,300 in the 12 months to January 2016.

In terms of developments in mortgage availability for the remainder of 2017, lenders viewed borrowing into retirement as the segment of the market with the biggest prospects for growth, with a total of 83 per cent of lenders anticipating that there would be greater availability of mortgage finance to such individuals.

The area of the market chosen by brokers to have the greatest increase of availability over 2017 was lending to landlords using a limited company vehicle, with 65 per cent envisaging growth potential.

"The low rate environment is ideal for existing homeowners looking to switch onto a better mortgage deal, and it is no surprise that both lenders and brokers foresee significant increases in this part of the market. While mortgage rates look as though they might have bottomed out, any increases are likely to be minor and will still be conducive to remortgaging activity," Williams explained.

"It is also positive to see that lenders predict greater availability for customers looking to borrow into retirement. This part of the market has been underserved in recent years, and it is vital that this growing demographic has access to the mortgage market," he concluded.

Sales soaring but agents reveal dip in first-time buyers

The number of sales agreed in the UK rose to a 10-year high in February but sales to first-time buyers fell, according to the latest figures from estate agents.

The data from the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA) shows that transactions increased to 11 per branch and the last time this figure surpassed 10 per branch was in September 2007.

The NAEA says it is an indication that buyer confidence is growing as it is up from eight sales per branch in January and six per branch in December 2016.

The figures also show that while there were higher sales in February, some 74% were below the original asking price suggesting sellers are taking a pragmatic approach to their property transactions.

But fewer first-time buyers were active with the proportion of sales which were agreed for them falling to 22% in February from 30% in January.

Meanwhile, supply has increased with more properties coming onto the market. The number of properties available to buy on estate agents' books increased to 44 in February, up from 38 in January.

But this is up 26% from a year ago when agents had just 35 properties available per branch.

Demand for properties was unchanged with the number of house buyers registered per member branch at 425 for the second month in a row.



The NAEA asked its members about the recently published Government housing white paper and found that 43% don't believe it will make a difference while 39% think the proposals could positively impact the market but can't yet tell how.

"The number of sales agreed reaching a 10-year high indicates the housing market is moving in the right direction.

"However, first-time buyers need to be a priority as the number of sales made to the group dipped in February when it should be growing," said Mark Hayward, NAEA

chief executive. "As house prices continue to rise, the market's most vulnerable buyers are being priced out and the only way to address this is to increase housing stock.

"The Government have pledged yet again to build more homes, but our members aren't feeling optimistic about the plans," he pointed out.

"If promises are kept and we see construction sites set up across the UK, we'll be in a better position in a few years than the stark reality we will be facing if this doesn't happen," he added.

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CHRIS, 40, attractive slim sophisticated redhead, seeking male 30-50's to relax with and get to know. Discretion assured. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426301

SAMANTHA, 35yrs, attractive brunette with own business, seeks adventurous gent for casual relationship. Tel: 0906 515 3035 Box 425979

JAN, 46, lonely divorced romantic female, brown hair, green eyes, curvy feminine figure, employed, OHAC, WLTm attentive male for TLC. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426255

JASMINE, 34yrs, non smoking first time dater. Easy going, affectionate and hard working. Due to work commitments I'm looking for a no strings companion any age. Looks unimportant must have GSOH. Tel: 0906 515 3031 Box 426201

PAM, 40, cuddly feminine young looking female, OHAC, financially secure, looking for fun times without complications with likeminded male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426253

HARRIET 42yrs, blue eyed brunette with long legs and decent curves! Looking for a cheeky adventurous man for fun only. I live alone so can accommodate and can travel. Discretion assured. ACA. Give me a try. Tel: 0906 515 3031 Box 426205

SUSAN, 41, sophisticated, confident, discreet, attractive female seeking professional male over 38 for friendship/relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426567

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3003 Box 419673

KAREN, 46, witty female who loves to laugh, WLTm similar male to share interests, romance, cosy nights in and more. Pls call. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426335

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715

BROWN eyed female, 66, smoker, likes music, cinema, theatre, meals out WLTm male 67-74 for LTR. Text only. Mailbox: 5806373

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399

LOUISE, 40s, youthful looking female looking for spontaneous male to put some love and lust back into my life. Call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426231

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent who no for strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 421375

FARMERS daughter, 69, single, likes heavy horses, animals, meals out, GSOH, friendship only, 65-75. Text only. Mailbox: 5799589

TAMIKKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3007 Box 422365



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JOSIE, sexy black lady, 52yrs seeks adult times with concerning gent, any age, discreet clean, womanly figure. Text only Mailbox: 4028592

JACKIE is 54yrs and an attractive easygoing brunette, she's hoping to meet a similar minded chap for some fun, dates, chats, text or call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426343

ANNABELLE, sophisticated 28yrs hoping to meet older gent for adult fun, discreet, sincere, genuine advertiser. Text only Mailbox: 4157105

MATURE lady 70s, various interests but still lonely, hoping to meet a gent to cheer me up, come on, we can have some fun together. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426349

MELINDA, 52yrs, attractive and broad minded seeking chap any age for some fun. Couples alone. Text only Mailbox: 4131946

GENTS, please call me if you are looking to meet a kind sincere lady for nights at the theatre, socialising etc. You can call or text me. I promise to reply, I'm very genuine. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426345

EILEEN mid 60s seeks gent 50s-60s for friendship, possibly much more. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425341

KELLY young attractive vivacious 48yr old lady, loves good food, cosy nights in/out, holidays etc., WLTm male for mutual companionship without ties. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425913

DONNA naughty 40's, pretty, loves nights in gym, theatre, seeks someone to make me laugh, give lots of cuddles and go on fun dates. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425867

CHLOE pretty single female 36yrs, dark hair/eyes, slim build, very lonely and looking for reliable discreet male for mutual companionship maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426079

BROWN eyed Brummie female, 66, smoker, likes music, cinema, theatre, meals out WLTm male 67-74 for LTR. Text only. Mailbox: 5780679

KELLY young attractive vivacious 48yr old lady, loves good food, cosy nights in/out, holidays etc., WLTm male for mutual companionship without ties. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425913

STACY 28yr old gorgeous brunette with buxom figure, intelligent and sensual, WLTm female male to get to know for fun dates and more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425457

SARAH, 41, dizzy blonde, blue eyes, loves to dance, seeks affectionate, hunky, fun male to make her laugh and brighten up her day. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425413

LINDA, 48yrs attractive brunette seeks gent for laughter, winning dining. Age unimportant. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425337

LOVING lady, romantic and tactile seeks likeminded gent for special times, lets make each other feel special. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425325

ATTRACTIVE Caribbean lady 59yrs, very jolly and fun seeking gent any age who must love good times. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425323

TRACY, 41, outgoing sun worshiper, OHAC, employed, looking for her Prince Charming to enjoy romantic holidays and good times together. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425257

SHARON 36yr old single mum looking for loving guy who will appreciate me and help repair my broken heart. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425283

SHELLEY slim N/S 40's female who likes the simple things in life so no big gestures required, seeking loyal loving male for hopeful LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425253

SANDRA, smart, sophisticated lady young looking 60s, genuine and kind seeks gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424671

HELEN, mid 50's naughty lady seeks some fun times with gent any age. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424493

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AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418117

JEAN, 40, 5ft slim, busty blonde, new to dating and fed up of going through the pub scene, WLTm down to earth male for adult company. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425671

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SINGLE male, 31 years old, brown eyes, black hair, 6ft, seeks single slim athletic build lady similar age for fun, hopefully more. Text only. Mailbox: 4765584

JAY, attractive, 6ft2, single father, loves a laugh and a giggle, looking for a lady for evenings out, company and maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424303

CHRISTIAN, 57, 6ft, dark, likes walking, nice meals and socialising, looking for discreet times with a similar fun lady. If you are interested please contact me. I look forward to hearing from you. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425947

STEVE, 59, sincere and genuine, likes pub meals, country walks and cinema, seeks Chinese, Thai, Black, Asian or Italian lady, looks unimportant but personality is for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425831

SOLVENT gentleman, young 70s, loves life seeking a lady of any age to spoil and pamper, take on holidays, wine and dine. Genuine advertiser. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425935

WILLIAM, young 56, would like some adult fun with a sexy lady, any age, wants and good time and discreet fun. Text only. Mailbox: 5321154

MALE, 60s, 5ft10, slim build, looking to meet female, for a mature adult relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426053

MALE, 58, works in agriculture, lives in North Shropshire area, likes the countryside, days at the coast even in the winter, meals out, looking for loving, caring, country girl, 50s-60s. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426037

IAN, 5ft6, looking for somebody, 18-60, for general good fun times, days out, nights out, meals, sightseeing and visiting various parts of the country. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 426437

MALE 45, 6ft, blue eyes, dark hair, slim, likes sports, cinema, meals out, seeking loving, caring female to share life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 406737

YOUNG 60, West Midlands male, 5ft8, grey hair, wear specs, GSOH, sexy Scorpio, broad minded, slim to medium build, varied interests, seeking a genuine, honest, sexy lady for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425137

40 year old Hungarian male, 5ft8, slim

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New and exciting powertrains for the future

Hybrid power to boost performance

When Ford installs a hybrid powertrain in an RS or ST model it will only be done so to boost performance – that's the bold claim of the brand's global performance director Dave Pericak.

The man in charge of the Blue Oval's performance cars across the globe said that the manufacturer was looking at a variety of different technologies to enhance its hot models.

He said: "I think if we electrify performance vehicles, it will be to enhance the performance of those vehicles. You may get a fuel economy benefit as a result, but it won't be geared towards that, it will be geared towards enhancing performance. Electrification can be used to do that."

Pericak said that current technology was restricting Ford – but that may change in the future.

"If you're going to look at electrification, you want to push the boundaries of what you can do today," he said.

"So, we know we can accelerate a car pretty darn fast with electrification, we can do a lot of things, but we can't sustain it. The issue is that the technology isn't ready yet to sustain high levels of performance. You can only get bursts."

One thing is for sure, though – new and exciting powertrains are key to Ford's performance future.

Pericak added: "We're going to be open to all powertrains and all different technologies, and that's going to be part of how we continue to evolve performance products, get them better and, at the same time, improve fuel efficiency and CO2 emissions, so we'll see where we go."

"We've got a lot in the works."

Berlingo Multispace adds electric option to the range

As the benchmark leisure activity vehicle for over 20 years, the Citroën Berlingo has consistently exceeded the expectations of its customers.

The new E-Berlingo Multispace keeps all of the original car's practicality and modular design, and adds the efficiency and driving pleasure of an electric vehicle.

With a range of up to 106 miles, the new model meets the needs of private customers and businesses alike, with easy charging and all the benefits of electric mobility.

The Citroën Berlingo passenger car is now available with an electric drivetrain, in the form of the E-Berlingo Multispace. The new model offers a refined, zero-emission driving experience and sets new standards in the sector for peace-of-mind and ease of use.

This new addition to the Berlingo Multispace range retains the versatile design, space, comfort and essential equipment that has made the conventionally-powered models such a benchmark in the leisure activity vehicle segment. The new E-Berlingo Multispace extends Citroën's electric vehicle range, which already includes the C-Zero, E-Mehari and Berlingo Electric LCV.

Swiftly

Powered by a compact and high-performance permanent magnet synchronous motor, the new vehicle accelerates swiftly and smoothly. The refined and comfortable ride of this versatile car is designed to meet the demands of active families, whilst adding all the advantages of an electric drivetrain.

The new vehicle's lithium-ion battery packs are positioned in the subframe either side of the rear axle, which means the cabin layout and boot volume are retained. The E-Berlingo Multispace has a modular design that can accommodate up to five, or larger loads when the seats in row 2 are folded away. The boot volume is amongst the best in class at 675 litres with five people on-board, increasing to 3,000 litres with the second row of seats folded away. The row two seats can also be removed completely to create a fully flat load area. Access to the vehicle is easy with two sliding side doors, plus a large rear tailgate. The tailgate has a window that opens independently, making loading the boot.

The E-Berlingo is perfect for urban and suburban use, and professional applications where there is easy access to charging points. The new model offers all the benefits associated with a 100% electric vehicle,



The new E-Berlingo Multispace will be available in the UK in the autumn

including environmental advantages, low running costs, plus taxation and parking benefits. The new E-Berlingo Multispace is equipped with the same proven electric drivetrain as the Berlingo Electric LCV, which is already in service with numerous fleet customers across Europe.

With a range of 106 miles, measured on the NEDC cycle, the E-Berlingo Multispace is perfectly adapted to consumer use – the majority of European motorists drive less than 60 miles each day.

The E-Berlingo Multispace can be re-charged to 50% of its total range in 15 minutes or to 80% of capacity in 30 minutes from a dedicated rapid charge point. This uses the vehicle's D/C rapid charging port (CHAdeMO). The standard charge time is 8 hours using the 16 A, Type 2 cable or as little as 10 hours from a domestic 3-pin socket. The motor also provides regenerative braking when the vehicle is slowing down, helping to re-charge the batteries and reduce brake wear. The E-Berlingo develops 67hp (49kW) and has 200Nm of torque

immediately available. The two high-capacity lithium-ion battery packs, with a combined rating of 22.5kWh, lower the car's centre of gravity for even more dynamic stability.

For an even more user-friendly experience, the new E-Berlingo Multispace comes with remote-controlled functions for use via a smartphone. These functions include a facility that allows the driver to pre-heat or cool the interior prior to accessing the vehicle. The driver can also remotely check their car's battery charge level.

There is also an innovative eco-driving assistance programme, which helps the driver adopt the most economical driving style to optimise range. The navigation system displays speed limits and traffic information, as well as charging points that can be reached by the vehicle based on the remaining range.

The E-Berlingo Multispace has lower running costs than an equivalent petrol or diesel Multispace. The traction battery is included in the price and offers peace-of-mind with an 8-year/60,000 mile warranty.

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New model runs Amarok over rivals



Ingredients are a recipe for success

By John Griffiths

It's something of a surprise that Skoda has only just unveiled its first ever sports utility vehicle, when this is by far the fastest-growing sector of the car market.

After all, it's 'family of VW, Audi and SEAT all have their own SUVs, as does nearly every other manufacturer. But there's a real benefit in being late to the party: you can see what everyone else is doing, what the buyers want, and do it different and do it better. And that is just what Skoda has done with its new Kodiaq.

It's bigger than the average SUV, with five or seven seats, comes with a choice of the latest VW Audio group petrol and diesel engines with the comfort and driving dynamics of the widely acclaimed Superb saloon and estate.

It is well-equipped and has a premium feel, while seriously undercutting many rivals which claim a place in that category. In short, it ticks all the boxes.

Prices range from £21,565 for the entry level version with a 125PS petrol engine and front wheel drive through 24 variations to £34,050 for the top specification Edition with a 150PS turbo diesel, a dual clutch automatic gearbox and four wheel drive.

There is a more powerful, 180PS option but the 2.0 litre, 150PS diesel and its petrol equivalent – the group's proven 1.4 litre turbo – are likely to account for the majority of sales.

Compared to many of today's SUVs, the Kodiaq has a lower, sleeker and sportier look perhaps because of its length – 40mm more than the Octavia. Combine that with short overhangs and a long wheelbase and the design has allowed for the most efficient use of interior space, with room for seven and a generous luggage compartment.

Even the third row seats can accommodate an adult, at least on shorter trips, and when not in use can be folded flat into the floor,

creating a family-sized 720 litres of luggage space. Fold the three centre row seats and that increases to a van-like 2,065 litres. The centre row seats has a generous amount of legroom, and headroom isn't an issue wherever you're sitting.

The use of quality materials adds to the premium feel, along with some of the latest technology and a new infotainment/connectivity system.

Nimble

This premium feel is matched by the driving experience. The Kodiaq feels light and nimble – surprisingly so considering its size – and is as agile as a hatchback, with neutral steering and flat, roll-free cornering with impressive levels of grip. While the test drive was in dry conditions, the all-wheel drive and electronic stability systems give every confidence that it would feel equally secure in the wet.

The first test car was powered by the familiar 150PS, 2.0 litre turbo diesel which is a lively performer – 0 to 62mph in under ten seconds and average fuel consumption of up to 52.3mpg. Although that's a laboratory test figure my experience with the car shows it is possible to achieve something very close to that, especially if you select the 'ECO' driving mode. The CO2 figure is 131g/km, using the AdBlue system to reduce toxic emissions.

The engine is a bit of a smoothie. With maximum pulling power of 350Nm across the normal driving range of 1,750 to 3,000rpm it's flexible and lively from the word go, and rarely raises its voice above a whisper.

The petrol option, the 1.4 turbo, offers an identical maximum power figure although with less torque.

Maximum pulling power is also on tap over a wider band, 1,400 to 4,000rpm so performance is within a few tenths of a second of its diesel counterpart. Official fuel

consumption is 44.8mpg and the CO2 rating from 143g/km.

As the figures show, its performance is very close to that of the larger capacity diesel and with its relatively high torque it's just as smooth and relaxed to drive. The choice between the two will be a personal one, bearing in mind individual and finance considerations.

The Kodiaq has a raft of hi-tech driver assistance and safety features, some of them firsts for Skoda. One of them particularly apt for this type of vehicle is towing assist which takes over the job of steering car and trailer in reverse, as well as braking if necessary.

The drive select mode sets up the throttle, auto gearbox (if fitted), air conditioning it a variety of driver-selected modes, from normal to Eco and Sport. That's taken a step further with the optional dynamic chassis control, which uses electric valves to control the response of the shock absorbers.

There's also an optional off-road mode for those who want to venture off hard surfaces. Handy for those times (and for city car parks) is the area view camera system whereby the view from cameras mounted in the front, rear and door mirrors and be seen on the central touchscreen/monitor.

Front assist and city brake warn the driver and, if necessary brake the car, to avoid a collision with vehicles or pedestrians. Familiar aids such as adaptive cruise control, traffic sign recognition, lane keeping assistance and blind spot detection are all available.

The central touch screen is also home to the navigation system on higher grade models, plus – another first – Skoda's new 'Connect' system with a range range of information such as parking and weather information as contact with an emergency call centre at the touch of a button. It also contains the audio and connectivity systems, such as Bluetooth

SKODA KODIAQ, FROM £21,565



Good looks, plenty of space and efficient engines make it good value for money

and Mirrorlink for smartphone users. All Kodiaqs come with features such as alloy wheels, multifunction steering wheel, roof rails, electric windows and door mirrors, fog lights, a range of electronic safety systems and air conditioning. Further up the range you get an upgraded stereo, cruise control, dual zone climate control, automatic lights and wipers, rear parking sensors and tinted glass.

The SE-L is the grade at which seven seats become standard (they're an option on lower trim models) as well as satellite navigation, LED headlights, heated from seats and a

power tailgate, as well as upgraded trim. The flagship Edition model gets larger, 19-inch alloys, electrically adjustable front seats, full leather upholstery and wireless phone charging.

While competition is more fierce than ever in the SUV sector, the Kodiaq has all the ingredients – good looks, generous levels of space for people and luggage, high levels of equipment and a choice of efficient engines – which should mean the recipe for success.

It also means value for money, especially when compared to a raft of rivals.

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Mascots turned out for the annual Mascot Assault Course



Stourbridge and West Bromwich Albion Legends teams line-up for kick off on Sunday, alongside the matchday mascots



Albion's Darren "Big Dave" Moore chatting with fans at half-time



The Mayor of Dudley, Mohammed Hanif, showed his support

Victory in bag for Albion but hospice the winner

SPORTING FEATURE

By Dan Malin

A lot of the lads have already signed up to be there next year, so we're confident of retaining our title and can't wait to do it all again!

A CHARITY football match between Stourbridge Old Boys & West Bromwich Albion Legends has raised more than £20,000 for the Mary Stevens Hospice, which provides 24-hour care for families battling the impact of life-limiting illnesses.

The game was played at Stourbridge FC's War Memorial Athletic Ground, at Amblecote, in front of a capacity crowd as the teams competed for the Jane Webb Memorial Trophy, named in remembrance of the local woman who provides the motivation for the game each year. The day also included a huge family fun day, a sporting auction, and the opportunity for local children to have an once-in-a-lifetime matchday experience, as mascots, ball-children or flag-bearers.

Crowds were also treated to a mascot assault course sponsored by Midcalf Nicholls, with characters from the likes of West Bromwich Albion's Baggie Bird and Wolverhampton Wanderers' Wolfie joining those from Toys 'R' Us, The Tenth Lock and Mommy's Mascots in a chaotic obstacle course, which saw Baggie Bird steal an unlikely, late victory.

Amazed

After raising £15,000 in its debut year in 2016, event co-founders Matt Webb and Mark Naylor had hoped they would beat last year's sum but confessed that they found themselves "absolutely amazed" by the support the day received this year from supporters, players and volunteers.

In total, more than 40 players took part in the day, including 15 former-pros such as former Baggies skipper Darren "Big Dave" Moore, Richard Sneekes, Bob Taylor, Nigel Quashie, Geoff Horsfield and Des Lyttle.

Moore has now captained the Albion side for two years in a row, and delighted fans by playing in goal for 15 minutes at the end of the second half, before running the length of the pitch to take and score a penalty.

Fans witnessed 10 goals on the day with Albion

running out 6-4 winners in a hotly-contested match under the sweltering April sun, with fans taking to Facebook and Twitter afterwards to comment how much they'd enjoyed the day.

Charity, of course, was the big winner. The Mayor of Dudley, Mohammed Hanif, was also on hand to meet the children involved in the day and to chat to players before kick-off, alongside the Hospice CEO, captain Stevan Jackson.

Matt Webb, Stourbridge Legends captain and event co-founder said: "It really is just still sinking in."

"When you look around, and all you can see is just thousands of families enjoying the day it brings it all home. Honestly, there's no feeling like it."

He added: "I can't tell everyone involved how grateful I am for making the day possible, and thank you so much to the thousands of people who came along and supported the match, I hope they all enjoyed it and we can't wait to go again. We've got a trophy to win back!"

Mark Naylor, West Bromwich Albion Legends manager and event co-founder said: "I don't think I've ever experienced anything like that."

"To have such overwhelming support from the local community, the clubs, the charities and everyone else involved was absolutely incredible and the end result of all of that hard work was a day that we'll never forget."

A lot of the lads have already signed up to be there next year, so we're confident of retaining our title and

can't wait to do it all again!" Amanda Bowen, deputy fundraising and lottery manager said: "Matt and Mark simply can't be praised highly enough for what they've done."

"It's not just the fact that they've paid for so many families to receive our care when they need it most, it's the day they create for the community."

"They bring people together to simply enjoy being together as a family and watch absolute superstars roll back the years."

"The work that has gone into this event has been absolutely huge, and to see it all come together in the way it did was just so special."

She added: "So we'd like to say thank you to the supporters who turned up in their thousands, the volunteers who make days like this possible, the staff who have worked so hard, West Bromwich Albion and Stourbridge for being so, so supportive of the event and, maybe most importantly, Jane Webb for raising such an incredibly kind-hearted man. She also took care of the weather, which was more than we could ever have asked."

Memorabilia

After the game, a sporting auction and post-match party took place in the Stourbridge FC club house, with signed and match-worn memorabilia donated by a plethora of first-team West Bromwich Albion stars including Ben Foster, Gareth McAuley, James Morrison, Chris Brunt and the recently-departed Jonas Olsson.

In the midst of everything going on, on the day, the thousands in attendance also perfectly observed a minute's silence before kick-off, to pay their respects to the Wilkinson family whose devastating loss has shocked the town this week.

All involved in the organisation of this event would like those affected to know that their hearts and thoughts are with them at "this impossibly difficult time".

To find out more about the work of the Mary Stevens Hospice, visit www.marystevenshospice.co.uk

● Images and videos from the day are available to view on the hospice Facebook page: www.facebook.com/marystevenshospice

Testing time for Josh as new season starts

TEENAGE race ace Josh Hiatt enjoyed his first proper run out on his new KTM bike during an official test day at Mallory Park.

The Cannock starlet, just 14, has made the step up from the Mextrakit series to compete in this year's KTM Cup, which supports the British Superbike series.

Hiatt will be one of the youngest riders on the grid this season, which began last weekend. He was working hard on his fitness behind the scenes ahead of the campaign getting under way.

Father Nigel said: "Josh met all the riders from the championship and he also got in lots of track time too, which was good. I think Josh will be one of the youngest riders on the grid because with the changes some of them will be 22-years-old this year."

Nigel said testing went well at Mallory Park, with the bike working and his son getting quicker every time he went out.

"It was encouraging because it's a much bigger bike than the one he's used to riding," he said. "But he's still enjoying it every time he goes out. He seems to find riding a two-stroke rather than a four-stroke."

"He's getting more and more confident on it."

Erin runs and swims to top five position

A DUDLEY schoolgirl has become one of the top five biathletes in the country. Erin Maher was one of three pupils from Maidensbridge Primary in Wall Heath who travelled to London's Crystal Palace National Sports Centre for the British Schools Modern Biathlon Championships.

And after shattering a number of personal bests on the track and in the pool, the Year 6 pupil secured an impressive fifth place overall in the under-11s girls' category.

Erin, Amie Parker and Jamie Hiscox, who all attend the Beachcroft Road school, qualified for the championships through their performances in two qualifying events in October and November last year.

Modern Biathlon involves an 800m run followed by a 50m swim. Each performance is awarded points and then combined to produce final standings.

Amie's hopes of similar success were dashed by an ankle injury in the 800m, while Jamie finished 78th out of 165 in the under-11 boys' category. Dean Nolan, deputy headteacher at Maidensbridge Primary, said: "We are very proud of what these children have achieved."

Erin is also the current Dudley Schools' cross-country champion.

Quiet Men Gethin has big shout at title

IT'S been a whirlwind three months for Walsall boxer Martin Gethin – from the clutches of retirement to competing for the WBO Inter-Continental title and winning an IBF International belt in-between.

'The Quiet Man' defeated Liam Richards in front of a few hundred fans at Walsall Town Hall back in November in what was supposed to be his farewell fight in his hometown.

Just days later he got the call to travel to London for the IBF International super lightweight title at Wembley Arena and overcame John Wayne Hibbert with fourth round knockout.

That victory has now landed Gethin a shot at the WBO Inter-Continental Super Lightweight title against the highly-rated 23-year-old Jack Catterall at the Manchester Arena on Saturday, a bout broadcast live on Boxnation and BT Sport.

Also on the card, Terry Flanagan defends his WBO lightweight title while super welterweight rivals, Liam Smith and Liam Williams, go toe-to-toe.

Double Olympic gold medallist Nicola Adams will make her pro bow, alongside fellow debutant and amateur stand-out Daniel Dubois.



Heathens to face tougher tests – boss

CRADLEY boss Will Pottinger admits tougher tests are just around the corner after their massive opening night win over King's Lynn.

The Heathens return to Wolverhampton's Monmore Green for their next home match on Easter Monday, April 17, when they face Mildenhall. But they started the season by tearing apart King's Lynn 61-29 at Birmingham last week with every rider in the points.

Said Pottinger: "It was a very pleasing, confidence boosting result for the lads. But we know there will be tougher tests ahead."

"King's Lynn weren't the strongest but you can only do the job on the night and it was nice to see all the lads in the points."

He added: "I was particularly pleased to see riders like Luke Harris and Joe Lawlor scoring well. I think we have potential to have a good season."

Tom Perry opened his campaign with a maximum on his return to the Heathens side after two seasons with Birmingham.

Said Perry: "It's great to be back with Cradley and I obviously couldn't have asked for a better start."

"To get my own season up and running like that is ideal and hopefully I can put in performances similar to that all season."

"It wasn't just about me though, everyone rode well and everyone did their job and more."

"We know we'll have tougher meetings this year but there were definitely plenty of encouraging signs from all of the team."

"We wanted to send a message out to the rest of the league and I think we definitely did that!"

"Now we're really looking forward to the next meeting on Easter Monday."

Harper relishing underdog tag as title bout looms

ADAM Harper believes he is the underdog ahead of his Midlands Area super welterweight title with fellow unbeaten prospect Ryan Kelly and plans to use it to his advantage next month.

The pair clash on Matchroom Boxing's latest Birmingham show at the Barclaycard Arena on May 13.

Harper, 28, said: "I need these kind of fights to bring the best out in me. From what I've heard, people have me as the underdog. That's perfect for me; it makes my job easier."

"The Hurricane" has reduced his hours, working in a school, to part-time so that he can focus on his boxing dream. He splits his time between Frankie Gavin's Ringside Gym in Birmingham and Errol Johnson's BCB Gym in Wednesbury.

Birmingham's first world champion Kal Yafai tops the bill, defending his WBA world super-flyweight title against Suguru Muranaka. Halesowen's Lennox Clarke is also on the bill, as are Frankie Gavin, Gamal Yafai, Jordan Clayton, Charlie Williams and Cori Gibbs. Sam Egginton fights Cerefino Rodriguez for the European welterweight title.

Denny wary of Warburton in clash



Rowley Regis middleweight Tyler Denny

ROWLEY Regis fighter Tyler Denny is fully aware of the dangers his new opponent will present when they clash at the Venue in Dudley this weekend.

Denny steps through the ropes with replacement William Warburton on Saturday.

Denny is still protecting his unbeaten record and has set his sights on the vacant Midlands middleweight title, with Tom Stokes the name in the frame as a potential co-challenger. That leaves little room for error against Warburton, who claimed the scalp of his gym-mate Jason Welborn in May.

Warburton only has 23 victories from his 141

Boxing

pro bouts but is capable of springing a shock, although Denny is confident on taking that risk. Tickets, priced at £35 and £50 ringside with waitress service, are available via Denny on 07557 879 077. Alternatively, contact him on Facebook.

Flyweight Waleed Din has been added to the six-bout card. The 24-year-old from Sheffield, dubbed 'Dynamite,' has romped to eight victories from nine pro contests, with five TKOs, since turning pro in 2014. He was senior ABA champion in 2013.

Benbow on mark again to earn point

Hednesford Town 1 Stourbridge 1
A STUNNING Luke Benbow free-kick grabbed a late share of the spoils for Stourbridge at Hednesford Town on Monday night.

The visitors began the game on the front foot and almost took the lead in the fourth minute when Leon Broadhurst saw an effort from 25 yards deflected just past the post.

Kayleden Brown failed to beat Dan Crane in the Hednesford goal with two efforts, before Jordan Nadat had the Pitmen's first opportunity.

Glassboys threatened in the second half as Benbow hit the bar then Dan Preston hit the post, but the hosts went in front on 69 minutes as Nadat flicked on a cross and Danny Glover turned home.

Hednesford almost added a second in the 82nd minute as Nadat saw a shot well saved, but just two minutes later Benbow's wonderful free-kick earned a share of the spoils.

It was Glassboys second successive 1-1 draw following a stalemate at play-off rivals Buxton on Saturday.

Boss Gary Hackett praised felt slightly disappointed to not get all three points after Luke Benbow's 28th goal of the season had pulled his side level from an early deficit.

Hackett said: "This is a tough place to come, Buxton don't concede many goals and I felt after the first 15 or 20 minutes we were the better side and whilst I'm pleased with a point I thought if anyone was going to get all three it was us."

The Glassboys were badly depleted by injury and conceded through Nial Doran after just four minutes.

The equaliser came a minute before half-time Benbow turned and bent the ball in from 20 yards out, with it hitting underneath the crossbar before finding the net.

Promising start to swimmers' season

NEWLY-PROMOTED Halesowen began their Nuneaton Junior League season with a promising sixth-place finish.

The club travelled to Pingles Leisure centre, Nuneaton, last Saturday for the opening round against some of the best teams in the West Midlands.

The majority of swimmers achieved personal bests and there were spirited debuts from 10-year-old Alexa Denton as well as nine-year-olds Olivia Fidler, Grace Guy, Annabel Stark, Regan Crump, Troy Hill, Ray Mellor, Kai Panesar, Samuel Pestrige and Erin Kelly. Final scores: Leicester Sharks A 243, Nuneaton 213, Braunstone 192, Rugby 161, Northgate 146 and Halesowen 112.

★ ★ ★

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Thursday, April 6, 2017

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HALES RUN THE LEADERS CLOSE

Broad Street 33 Old Halesonians 24
HALES travelled to top of the league Broadstreet with many changes in the line-up.

Four members of the brilliant Colts side represented the first XV and all stepped up to the mark. Jack Manison was at second row and Harrison Plumb at flanker, Jamie Keen started at 9 with Josh Woodward as replacement forward.

There was also a long-awaited welcome back for Steve Powell following a serious knee injury in a training incident before the start of last season – he was also on the bench.

The visitors seemed relaxed but confident against a well-structured home side. However, after only five minutes Street released their backs for an early unconverted try.

Hales fought back with some strong scrum-maging by front row Matt Young, Sam Jones and Matt Probert. The home side were strong outside the pack, though, and thanks to three tries in quick succession led 26-0.

Regroup

Hales were definitely under pressure but tackled everything in an effort to regroup. Talisman Neil Mason received a yellow card followed by Ian Briggs to leave the visitors under the cosh with 13 men. But they fought back with some great running by Chris Hooper, Carl Robinson and Joe Collingham.

The Hales pack again dominated with Keen and Hooper feeding the backs. A great try from prop Probert pulled the score back to 26-5.

From the restart Hales again took the initiative with Mason and Briggs back on the field. Manison had to leave with a shoulder injury, replaced by fellow Colt Woodward. But the visitors took the game to Broad Street with a dominant passage of play resulting in a try for Mason.

The second half saw Keen replaced by Powell due to a recurring ankle injury, Powell slotted in well and Hales were well up for the challenge. The second half was all Hales and a Mason try, converted by Briggs made it 26-17.

The home side came back and slipped through for a converted try, but with five minutes to go, Collingham scored a try, which was converted.

Hales meet Derby at home on Saturday, Presidents' Day, kick off 3pm, for a must-win penultimate league fixture.

Dog collared from field of play



Halesowen players try to stop the errant dog that ran on to the pitch

Halesowen Town1 Skelmersdale 0

HALESOWEN took a huge step towards safety with victory over relegated Skelmersdale in a must-win contest ahead of five consecutive away games.

But already relegated Skem battled bravely with victory over relegated Skelmersdale in a must-win contest ahead of five consecutive away games.

Defender Bradley Lewis headed home the all-important 55th minute winner. Three minutes later Platt saved Steven Gillespie's spot-kick.

The first half was interrupted when Yeltz

central defender Jonathon Moran was stretched off with a knee injury and there was a further delay caused by a loose dog.

The canine caper was the best in show at The Grove, running onto the field of play and dodging several players to the delight of the crowd. Stewards and the apparent owners of the dog also made their way onto the pitch and, after wreaking havoc for around six minutes, Halesowen defender Asa Charlton managed to usher the furry friend off and play resumed.

The video has proved very popular on social media, with a number of supporters leaving comments.

Watch the video at expressandstar.com

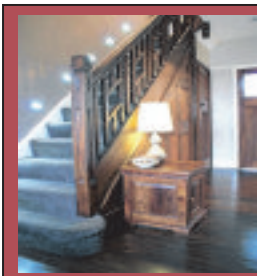
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